



Ways to Support Your Teen After a Breakup

It is important for us to remember that teen romance, along with positive feelings, brings emotional risks as well. Don't deprive your teen of these risks, but be there for them when things fall apart, which most teen romances do. Breakups are an important part of adolescent development. They make room for and prepare your child for other relationships in their future.

Romantic relationships play a significant role in the life of a teenager. In fact, the biggest emotional struggles in high school and college often come from breaking up with friends or romantic partners.

Below are tips to consider for supporting your teen following a romantic breakup.

Listen to them. Let your child talk, process, and vent if they need to. Don't make assumptions about what they are feeling – you can only know about their state of mind by asking and listening to what they share. Take your time and don't expect to have one single major conversation. Working through a breakup takes time. Let them know you're there to listen whenever they need.

Empathize with them. Tell them it sucks. Don't try to fix it. Don't tell them that there are other people out there for them to date. To your teen, in the early stages of that post-break-up shell shock, they just need to know that you know how much it hurts. That kind of connection can go a long way.

Ask who they'd like to talk with. It can be hard to hear that your child wants or needs to talk with some other adult – the other parent, an aunt or uncle, a coach or mentor. But sometimes it's easier to discuss their situation with someone other than you. Even though they love you, teens often feel they can be more open or get a more objective opinion by talking with another trusted adult. Encourage this. You can ask in a gentle, curious way whom they have talked with and what kind of input they are getting.

Recognize the importance of peer support. For teens, friends are often better at helping them navigate a breakup than parents. If your teen stops hanging out with friends, that's cause for worry for two reasons. First, your teen needs friends to help them to negotiate the tricky feelings and social rearrangements that breakups involve. Second, if your teen is becoming socially isolated, this could be a sign of depression.

Ask how they're doing. Tell them you're worried about them. *Don't* scold your teen and tell them to get over it. *Do* ask them how they're sleeping. Are they eating less? Are they enjoying anything at all? These are hallmarks of depression. If these behaviors take place for more than 2 weeks, contact your primary care doctor or a mental health professional to let them know about your concerns.

**Thanks for all you do to support a young person in your life.
It really makes a difference.**

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