

Helping your Teen Through a Romantic Break-Up

Dating and relationships are often very important to teens, and a romantic break-up or rejection can send a teen into a tailspin. Your teen may not tell you details about the break-up and might not want to hear your worldly advice on dating, but there are ways you can help your teen work through this challenging time and move forward.

One way to show support is by being open and available for your teen if she or he wants to talk. Provide support just by listening and reassuring, helping her find her own answers. You could also share some of your own early experiences of heartbreak. Let her know that you understand how hard it is to break up with someone. Remember, too, that it is okay if your teen voices her hurt in her own way, even if it may seem dramatic to you – she is learning to cope with her intense and very real feelings. Let her know that you take her feelings seriously, and together you might talk about, or do some research on, healthy coping strategies. [Kids Health](#) has some great suggestions and resources, as does [Kids Help Phone](#).

Don't minimize the break-up or your teen's feelings. He may feel as if his whole world has fallen out from under him. He has to learn how to handle a break-up, deal with changing relationships, and hold on to his self-esteem while feeling loss, pain and anger – and these are not easy things to accomplish. One of the trickier aspects of grieving a break-up is feeling multiple feelings at once: your teen might be sad, angry, and longing for their ex, all at the same time. Allow your teen to feel his feelings and give him time to heal. There are many things we can't control as parents and break-ups are one of those things. However difficult the break-up may be, it is a good learning opportunity for your child. He will learn about relationships and dating through his experiences, but you can also provide guidance by modeling healthy relationships and talking to him about relationships and break-ups.

Watch your teen for extreme changes in behaviour or moods. If you think your teen needs support to get through the break-up, you can encourage him or her to speak to her health care provider or a crisis help line. You might also want to speak to one of these professionals yourself if you are worried about your teen. If you or your teen need support right away, you can call the 24-hour Klinik Crisis Line in Winnipeg at 204-786-8686 or toll free at 1-888-322-3019—or your teen can call Kids Help Phone toll-free at 1-800-668-6868. If your teen is talking about suicide and you are worried about his or

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her safety, [click here for crisis resources across Manitoba](#), or take your teen to the nearest emergency room.

After a break-up, your teen will likely have a hole in his social calendar and may face unwanted questions or comments from peers. Some teens worry about their ex spreading rumours or sharing private information after the breakup. In some ways, it makes sense that your teen's ex will confide in friends. But, if malicious rumours are being spread, threats are being made, or if your teen feels afraid, put down, or intimidated, consider talking to your child's school, as bullying or harassing behaviour should not be tolerated. If you're not sure if what's happening is indeed bullying, check [Kids Help Phone](#) for more information. You can also find information on teen dating violence on [Kids Help Phone's website](#).

If you suspect that sexual images and/or videos of your child may have been created or shared with peers via the Internet and/or electronic devices, the [Cybertip.ca Resource Guide for Families](#) can assist parents in adequately responding to these types of incidents. As well, you and your teen can visit [Needhelpnow.ca](#) to find important strategies for dealing with the fallout of the spread of a sexual image online.

It's important that your teen continues to do the things he loves: sports, drama, or band—because keeping busy will reinforce how great he is, provide opportunities to make and keep friendships, and keep his mind on other things. Remind him that it might take some time to get over the break-up, but that people do survive and eventually find themselves interested in dating again.

Teens do not naturally or automatically know how to date, make-up or break-up. These are things that they will learn from their close relationships, peers, media and family. Parents who have healthy relationships with others can show their children how to have respectful relationships. The dramatic break-ups that we see on reality TV aren't necessarily realistic or healthy, and fixating or acting out often just makes the situation harder and more painful. Reminding your teen that respectful break-ups are part of respectful relationships is a good idea, and that speaking poorly of their ex might reflect

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badly on them, too. Supporting your teen through the ups and downs of dating will help him or her continue to learn and grow along the path to adulthood. They can do it – and so can you!

[Canadian Red Cross: Teens and Relationship Violence](#)

[Teen Talk: Healthy Relationships](#)