

LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

Your guide in wellness and mental health

Navigating Change in Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are rarely static. Even during periods that feel stagnant, they are usually evolving in some way. Sometimes that evolution feels exciting, such as deepening commitment, growing intimacy, and shared milestones. Other times, change feels disorienting and can bring emotional distance, conflict, or even the end of the relationship. No matter the kind of change within our relationships, it can be common to experience anxiety, rumination, mood shifts, difficulty sleeping, or urges to either cling or withdraw. The goal isn't to eliminate these reactions but to learn to respond to them skillfully.



An essential first step is allowing ourselves to feel any emotions that arise from relationship changes. It's rarely just one feeling. You might even notice conflicting feelings like grief and relief, or hope and resentment, existing side by side. When we judge those emotions, telling ourselves we "*shouldn't feel this way*" or that we "*should be over it by now*", we add a second layer of suffering. Instead of judging your emotions, try instead to just notice what's present – even if it's disappointment, fear, sadness or anger. Emotions can tell us something important, and by noticing and labeling them, we can actually reduce their intensity and make better decisions.

In addition to feeling our emotions, it's also helpful to inspect the thoughts that surface during relationship transitions. Strong emotions can fuel powerful stories: *I'll always be alone. I ruined everything. This proves I'm not enough.* These thoughts can feel undeniably true in the moment. Rather than automatically believing them, try gently questioning them instead. *What is the story I'm telling myself? What evidence supports it? What evidence might challenge it?* Is there a more balanced or compassionate way to interpret this situation? The goal isn't to create forced positivity but help us identify truth and how we can start to respond differently to our emotions and thoughts.

When romantic relationships change, so too do the routines and support systems built around them, and we may lose our sense of stability. If you feel lost or unsure how to move forward, taking time to clarify your values can help guide you regardless of how you feel in the moment. This might look like asking yourself, "What kind of partner do I want to be, even in difficult moments? What am I willing to tolerate, and what feels like a compromise of who I am?" By acting in alignment with your answers to those questions – your values – you can build a renewed sense of confidence and direction in who you are and where you want to go, even when outcomes remain uncertain.

Get Started Today

Adjusting to change in romantic relationships is not a linear process. Some days you may feel steady and hopeful. Other days might bring waves of grief or uncertainty. That's a natural part of healing and figuring out a way forward. Consider enrolling in Learn to Live's Resilience program to learn tools that can help navigate any relationship. Or learn more about your overall mental health and wellbeing needs by taking a quick mental health assessment. Do this by scanning or visiting www.learntolive.com/partners and entering access code **MMHG**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

