

## **A BROKEN HEART**

### ***Psychoeducation + Therapeutic Worksheet***

#### **1. Understanding a Broken Heart**

A “broken heart” is not only an emotional state — it is a **multisystem response** involving the **brain, nervous system, body, and psychological self-concept**. Heartbreak activates circuits involved in pain, attachment, threat, and emotional memory.

##### **1.1 Attachment System Disruption**

Romantic and significant relationships activate our **attachment system**.

Losing a relationship triggers:

- A sense of unsafe disconnection
- Fear-based responses
- Emotional dysregulation
- Activation of childhood attachment wounds

##### **1.2 Neurobiology of Heartbreak**

Research shows heartbreak activates the same brain areas as physical pain:

- **Anterior cingulate cortex**
- **Insula**
- **Amygdala** (threat detection)
- **Prefrontal cortex** (struggle to regulate emotions)

Stress hormones rise (cortisol, adrenaline), causing:

- Chest pain

- Stomach aches
- Sleep disturbance
- Fatigue
- Panic sensations

Some individuals even experience *stress cardiomyopathy* (“broken heart syndrome”).

### **1.3 Psychological Impact**

Heartbreak may create:

- Loss of identity or purpose
- Rumination
- Catastrophic thinking
- Fear of abandonment or rejection
- Grief symptoms

Heartbreak is a **grief process**, because you grieve:

- The person
- The future imagined
- The role you had
- Your sense of security
- What you invested emotionally

## **2. Emotional & Behavioural Signs**

### **2.1 Common Emotional Reactions**

- Sadness, longing, crying

- Anger or resentment
- Anxiety, panic, fear
- Shame (“Was I not enough?”)
- Guilt (“I should’ve seen it coming”)
- Confusion
- Hopelessness

## **2.2 Behavioural Signs**

- Withdrawal
- Checking behaviours (phone, social media)
- Overthinking
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleep disruption
- Impulsive actions
- Seeking reassurance or avoidance

## **3. Healing Phases in a Broken Heart**

### **Phase 1 — Impact**

- Shock
- Denial
- Disbelief
- Emotional overwhelm

- Physical distress

### **Phase 2 — Disorganization**

- Rumination
- Searching for answers
- Emotional chaos
- Anxiety & panic
- Bargaining
- Identity confusion

### **Phase 3 — Resignation / Sadness**

- Grief
- Depression-like symptoms
- Withdrawal
- Redefining self
- Emotional fatigue

### **Phase 4 — Reconstruction**

- Making sense of the loss
- Regaining stability
- Shifting beliefs
- Developing new habits & identity
- Emotional acceptance

### **Phase 5 — Recovered Self**

- Hope

- Reinvestment in life
  - Personal growth
  - Renewed identity
  - Capacity to love again
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## **4. Therapeutic Strategies for Healing**

### **4.1 Cognitive Strategies**

- Challenge “I’m not good enough” with evidence
- Identify catastrophic thoughts
- Separate facts vs emotional interpretations
- Reframe abandonment beliefs

### **4.2 Emotional Processing**

- Allow grief to unfold
- Journal emotional waves
- Name emotions: *“This is sadness, not failure.”*
- Release suppressed feelings safely

### **4.3 Somatic Regulation**

- Deep breathing
- Grounding (5-4-3-2-1)
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Sensory soothing

### **4.4 Attachment Repair**

- Explore childhood attachment triggers
- Differentiate past wounds from current reality
- Practice safe relationships
- Identify emotional needs

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## 5. Reflection Worksheets

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### Worksheet 1: What was lost?

#### 1. Describe the relationship you lost:

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#### 2. What roles did this relationship play in your life (identity, security, routine)?

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#### 3. What parts of yourself feel “broken” or empty now?

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### Worksheet 2: Emotional + Somatic Check-in

#### Emotions I feel most often right now:

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#### Where I feel heartbreak in my body (chest, stomach, throat):

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#### What increases these sensations?

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**Worksheet 3: Thought Audit**

**Recurring thoughts I have:**

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**Which of these thoughts are emotionally driven, not factual?**

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**What is a healthier alternative thought?**

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**Worksheet 4: Personal Attachment Wounds**

**What childhood experiences may be linked to this heartbreak?**

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**How is your younger-self reacting internally now?**

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**What would the older-self say to comfort them?**

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**Worksheet 5: Reconstruction & Growth**

**What have you learned about yourself from this heartbreak?**

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**What strengths are emerging?**

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**What area of life feels ready for new energy or growth?**

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## **6. Healing Affirmations**

- “I can survive feelings that feel impossible.”
- “This pain is temporary; it will change.”
- “Heartbreak does not define my worth.”
- “I am learning, healing, and growing.”
- “My heart can feel again, trust again, love again.”