

# When It Hurts This Much

A grounding guide for heartbreak, separation, grief, and emotional overwhelm

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First: this pain is real, and it makes sense.

You are not weak for feeling devastated. Your body is responding to loss, uncertainty, and attachment disruption. The goal is not to shut the pain off. The goal is to move through it safely, one hour at a time, without making permanent decisions inside a temporary emotional storm.

## 1. Give space without disappearing from your own life

The other person likely already understands how much you care. Repeating it over and over may accidentally keep your nervous system stuck in panic while also creating more emotional pressure.

For now, practice allowing space. Avoid chasing, monitoring, or trying to force clarity before it exists. Use some of that energy to reconnect with yourself instead of abandoning your own life in the process.

## 2. Communication during emotional overwhelm

- Avoid repeated emotional texts, long explanations, or multiple follow-ups when someone is not responding.
- If communication is necessary, try to keep it calm, simple, and respectful.
- Allow room for pauses and uncertainty instead of trying to immediately relieve the anxiety.

A grounding script if needed:

“I care deeply about this relationship, and I’m also trying to take care of myself right now. I want to approach things calmly and respectfully while we both have space to think.”

## 3. Reduce checking behaviors

Checking social media, locations, messages, or other forms of monitoring may temporarily soothe anxiety, but they often intensify the emotional spiral over time. Your brain receives a small moment of relief and then immediately searches for more reassurance.

Try replacing checking behaviors with a grounding skill instead.

## 4. When the grief wave hits

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Emotions naturally rise and move through the body. What often makes them feel unbearable is when the mind adds catastrophic stories, shame, fear, or imagined outcomes.

- Set a timer for 10–20 minutes and allow yourself to cry, journal, pray, reflect, or simply feel the emotion.
- When the timer ends, intentionally shift your physical state.
- Remember: feelings are information. They are not instructions.

## 5. Sensory tools that can interrupt the spiral

- Splash cold water on your face or hold ice/cold packs against your cheeks.
- Use sour candy, mint, or strong sensory input to bring your attention back into the present moment.
- Play music that represents how you want to feel rather than how you currently feel.
- Move your body: walk, stretch, clean, lift weights, or do anything physical that helps release emotional energy.
- Reach out to a safe person instead of isolating with the panic.

## 6. Create structure while your nervous system is overwhelmed

Heartbreak creates empty space that the mind often fills with fear and rumination. Structure can help reduce spiraling.

- Morning: shower, eat something nourishing, complete one simple task.
- Daytime: work if possible or choose one concrete activity that keeps you engaged with life.
- Evening: limit overstimulation and create intentional calming routines.
- Maintain daily contact with at least one grounded, safe person.

## 7. Social media boundaries are emotional first aid

Seeing photos, memories, or updates may repeatedly reopen the wound while emotions are still raw. Temporarily muting or unfollowing someone is not cruelty or avoidance. Sometimes it is emotional protection while your nervous system stabilizes.

## 8. Safety plan for dark thoughts

Intense heartbreak can create thoughts like “I can’t do this anymore” or “I don’t want to feel this.” Treat those thoughts as signals of overwhelm, not proof that the future is hopeless.

If thoughts become intense:

- Move away from anything you could use to harm yourself.
  - Contact a safe person immediately.
  - Use grounding or sensory tools to lower emotional intensity.
  - Do not isolate alone with the thoughts.
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- If you feel unsafe, call or text 988 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Your job tonight is not to solve the entire relationship. Your job is to stay safe and supported.

## 9. Anger is allowed, but it cannot drive the car

Anger, resentment, jealousy, and hurt are common after loss or rejection. Having those emotions does not make you a bad person. The work is learning how to feel them without allowing them to control your behavior.

Try this reframe:

“I can be deeply hurt and still act from my values. I can feel abandoned and still protect my future. I can be devastated without abandoning myself.”

## 10. What to focus on this week

- Give yourself permission to slow down.
- Reduce checking and monitoring behaviors.
- Eat, hydrate, and sleep as consistently as possible.
- Move your body every day, even briefly.
- Stay connected to safe people.
- Use grounding tools when emotions become overwhelming.
- Reach out for support immediately if thoughts become unsafe or unmanageable.

*You do not have to know how this ends today.*

*You only have to get through today without abandoning yourself.*

**Dr. Dallas Carey**