




**HOW TO**

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO MEND A BROKEN HEART

**GET OVER**

ITALIAN AMERICAN STYLE

**YOUR EX**



**RACHEL RUSSO, MS, MFT**



*HOW TO GET OVER YOUR EX: A Step by Step Guide to Mend a Broken Heart-Italian American Style* provides readers with solid strategies for getting over an ex as efficiently and wholeheartedly as possible. One part self-help and one part celebration of Italian American culture, it encourages readers to adopt a winning combination of Italian American characteristics and traditions, while embracing the power of family, faith, food, la dolce vita, and much more.

# How to Get Over Your Ex

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# **How to Get Over Your Ex:**

## **A Step By Step Guide to Mend a Broken Heart—Italian American Style**

Rachel Russo

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## **Step 1:**

### **Forgetaboutit: Realize Your Relationship Just Got Whacked**

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, starts with mourning the death of your relationship.

Take a deep breath.

Your relationship is over.

Breathe in.

It has all come to an end.

Breathe out.

No, really, things with your ex are dead and will never be the same.

Breathe again. Deeper.

I know that this is hard to hear, but it is my job to give you some tough love. My goal is to tell it like it is and give you the goods upfront, so I can shorten your pain like they shortened an Italian last name on Ellis Island!

Okay, chances are, your life is not like an episode of *The Sopranos*, and there was no mob boss who decided your ex had to get whacked.

Whether you decided to let go of him or her, got dumped, or were in a relationship in which the decision was mutual, you found yourself at the end of the road. No matter how things go down, breakups are rough. Love kills. Relationships die. Hearts get broken.

Repeat after me, right this second: I AM NOT BROKEN.

Doesn't sound very convincing yet, huh?

Can I get another: I AM NOT BROKEN?

Your relationship is broken though, and the aftermath is going to hurt.

Accepting things are over is no easy task. If you did not see any warning signs that your relationship was going downhill, it is likely that you are in denial that your relationship is truly broken. Being blindsided is common--especially for men. (This definitely applies to married men, as research shows it is women who typically file for divorce.) You may minimize how unhealthy your dynamic was, or make excuses for your ex's bad behavior. You may think the relationship can be fixed--especially if you were together a long time--or that you are going through a "break" and not a breakup. Even if you saw red flags, it can be hard to admit that things have really come to an end. Your ex's decision to split could have come as a shock to you or you just might not be able to wrap your head around never being able to go on dates or sleep with your ex again. If you were talking about spending your life together, it can be even harder to accept that the two of you are walking away instead of down the aisle.

It is difficult just to process what has happened in the days after a breakup. Your brain is foggy, and your heart is heavy. *Ugggh*. I totally get it. You are hurting, and I am truly sorry for your loss. You are soon going to have to try to forget about your relationship. You are probably thinking "How could I forget about it when everything reminds me of my ex?" Now that we are on the subject, it is totally normal to be relating everything to your ex right now. The teller at the bank that looked like your ex. The iced cappuccino that you last had with your ex. The Giorgio Armani cologne or Gucci perfume that smelled just like your ex. You will be thinking about your ex as you read this book, and you may be thinking about your ex when you finish reading this book.

Trust me; I know how hard it is. Chances are you may come to believe that there is nothing in the world as excruciatingly painful as losing someone you love--that is, until you realize you would rather projectile vomit than picture that person with someone else. *Yes, I've been there*

*too.* Let me give it to you straight like any true Italian American would: You are going to feel like crap. For a while. It's just the way the story goes. The reality of your situation is that life as you knew it has come to an end. I cannot stress this enough: A breakup is like a death.

### **The Grief Phase--Italian American Style**

When a relationship dies, you *should* feel like you are mourning a loss. Not only did you lose your ex-and perhaps a part of yourself-but you also lost the ability to go to all those places you used to love going to with your ex. That restaurant where you had your first date? The club where you first kissed? The part of Florida where you had your first vacation? *Yup, ruined forever. Or umm, at least dead to you for now.*

Speaking of death, you'll probably look and feel like it immediately after a breakup when you are going to go through different stages of the mourning process, starting with denial. Eventually, you are going to start feeling better. And then you are going to feel like crap again. If you choose to see your ex before it is safe to do so, you are going to get even more caught up in this vicious cycle. *Rinse & Repeat, much?* Too much breakup and makeup with your ex, and it won't be long until you start airing your dirty laundry like those Italian American neighbors who literally put it all up on a clothesline for everyone to see. It is tempting to talk about your drama with anyone and everyone who will listen. *And when they are sick of hearing it, you just find new people who aren't.* But there comes a point in which you must ask yourself: Do I really need an entire village to know my business?

In the aftermath of a breakup, there is a lot you need to forget about. (The less people you tell, the less people to remind you of it all.) You shouldn't even be communicating with your ex at all. (Much more on that later.) You should just be mourning. Your ex is not dead, but he or she might as well be dead to you---at least for a good chunk of time and possibly forever.

Grieving is completely acceptable if you are getting over your ex Italian American style. As a rule of thumb, we Italian Americans are very

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passionate people. We are loud, emotional, and probably just talking at a normal volume when our friends of other ethnic groups think we are screaming. A death in an Italian American family--and the traditions that follow--is typically a pretty big deal. Not only is there a lot of planning that goes into the wake, funeral, and repast, there is a likelihood that the death will really change things in a profound way. (Think holidays never being the same, and, ah, yes, family dynamics changing due to fights about wills and dividing the Estate.)

For Italian Americans experiencing a death of a loved one, mourning is the norm. It is a time we wear black, cry, and have people send fruit baskets to our home. Grieving is hard and embracing the mourning process helps us cope with the loss.

Don't think this isn't a process. When you go through a breakup--just like when you are dealing with the death of a loved one--you can't decide to grieve for a day and be done with it. You can't just turn your feelings on and off like a faucet. You might be able to turn off the sadness or lower its volume when you need to function at work or with friends, but it is likely your despair will come back again. After all, your relationship may be dead, but the memories and feelings live on—though the intensity of the awful feelings will weaken in time. It is best to realize that these emotions will fade in and out of your life for a while. Feelings for your ex may not completely go away, but you need to accept that the relationship is over and you have to move on despite them. You can love your ex all you want from a distance, but it does not mean that you should or will be together.

I know that once you come to a place of acceptance about your failed relationship you can survive and thrive after your breakup, because I have seen countless men and women do it. I've helped many of them move on before I even helped myself move on. For the record, it wasn't *too* long before I helped myself move on, but it took a lot more time than I anticipated. Being a dating and relationship expert doesn't make a girl immune to wounds in the battlefield of love. Unfortunately, it wasn't a piece of (Italian cream) cake for me, and it won't be for you.



No matter who you are, getting over an ex you really loved just isn't as easy as Badda Bing, Badda Boom. It is easier though if you take the right actions. Moving forward means taking immediate and proper action that is in line with the current reality that your relationship must be left in the past. Therefore, the very first thing you should do is understand that your relationship got whacked and that you need to manage your expectations about the process of getting over your ex. Treating a breakup like a death is one of the best things you can do for yourself, but only if you really embrace this notion.

First, acknowledge that the breakup should be permanent--even if you love your ex. You may know a couple who had a horrible breakup and got back together and seem to be doing just fine. I hate to burst your bubble, but they are an exception and not the rule. Love is messy, and a lot of messes just can't be cleaned up. Pain can come with any stage of love, but the ending love part is what can really do you and your relationship dirty. *Not as dirty as the mob; but let's just say nobody gets out unscathed.* Relationships are diverse, but when they break, the people in them can get pretty crazy.

One of the craziest things people do--besides calling an ex ten times in a row--is try and fix unhealthy relationships that can never really be fixed. The kinds of unhealthy relationships people try to save range from dull and unfulfilling, to ones that are broken beyond repair. I am talking about the type of relationships that have your friends and family members shaking their heads in disbelief. The relationships that inspire random strangers who catch you crying in public bathrooms to say sympathetic things like "It shouldn't be so hard."

When it becomes obvious that your relationship has gone bad, there is really only one good option: Forgetaboutit! You wouldn't drink milk that went bad in hope it'd change its form, now would you? When relationships turn sour and love starts to hurt, you have to realize that things most likely aren't going to work out. Most exes do not come back to each other and live happily ever after. Even if your ex comes back, it does not mean you will be happy together.

And, by the way, the plot of *The Notebook* is totally ridiculous! (Sorry Ryan Gosling; I would still birth your children!) If you just had a breakup, stay away from this movie. Now is just not the time for you to watch a movie about a guy creepy enough to wait around for an ex and build a house for her while she is getting ready to marry someone else. This stuff doesn't happen in real life. Okay, so technically some of your exes may come back. (Mine sure as hell did. *All of them. Sigh.*) But even if your ex does come back, you need to think your ex is not coming back.

In the meantime, keep reading, because I have some advice on the inevitable run in with an ex later...

So, basically, unless you believe in reincarnation, chances are your ex is not coming back to be with you forever. You can think that you were connected in past lives all you want, but you aren't going to let such impact your present reality, because you are supposed to be making like an Italian American. Kindly note: Anyone whose ancestors came from the boot shaped country weren't taught to believe in "that crap". The fact is that in the present, your relationship has run its course. So.....

### **Forgetaboutit!**

There are many things in life that end or change. Consequently, you are going to have to give up some of your old behaviors that reflect this new way of thinking about your relationship. While everyone is different, there are many things that most people need to forget about when healing a broken heart.

What you need to give up most are those behaviors that keep you stuck on your ex and give you false hope your relationship will work, as well as those that make you feel bad and hopeless about your future. There are common things that people do post breakup that lead to self-sabotage. You may be tempted to do some of these things, but you must avoid them at all costs. I will go into more detail about these things shortly, but for now, just recognize that they are counterproductive, and you will have to eliminate them from your life.

Wondering what you must forget about?

Without further ado, here are “My Fifty Shades of Forgetaboutit!”

You should not be:

1. Reminiscing over special times (There are better things you could have done than spend so much time with your ex, right? Likewise, your time would now be best spent creating an amazing life.)
2. Thinking you will never meet someone as special as your ex again (Sorry, your ex isn't that special.)
3. Thinking “out of sight out of mind” is a myth (Distance does help, eventually.)
4. Seeing your relationship as a waste of time (There are lessons you learned.)
5. Having unrealistic expectations about how fast you'll heal. (It is going to take some time.)
6. Feeling so alone (You aren't the first person to suffer from heartbreak, and you won't be the last. Think about it: All relationships eventually end.)
7. Thinking you won't get teary over little things (You will become more emotional post-breakup.)
8. Listening to songs that depress you and remind you of your ex (Create a new uplifting playlist.)
9. Going to psychics to see what they can tell you about your ex (This can become a vicious cycle. If you are so attached to the idea of your ex, you will just keep going to different psychics until one tells you something that you like!)
10. Wanting someone who doesn't want you

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11. Wanting someone who has moved on with someone else
12. Believing one more conversation will give you all the closure you need (More likely, it will just open an old or all new can of tomato sauce.)
13. Fantasizing about the perfect breakup (Relationships don't begin and end the way you want them to.)
14. Basing your moods on how your ex treats you (Your ex might treat you like shit, but it is up to you to decide whether or not you will allow yourself to feel like shit.)
15. Hoping for the happy ending (Hellllo, this isn't *The Notebook*.)
16. Needing to prove you were right in the relationship or about the relationship
17. Blaming everyone and anyone else for the end of your relationship
18. Believing you can fix your ex (You can't fix anyone. *Period.*)
19. Thinking you won't be able to live without your ex (Life will go on.)
20. Wearing out your welcome with friends (It happens. There will come a point where they get sick of hearing you talk about your ex.)
21. Remaining good friends with your ex's friends (If your ex isn't in your life anymore, why should his friends be getting your attention?)
22. Thinking you can decide the last time you will cry over your ex
23. Analyzing all the reasons why your ex has moved on without you

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24. Comparing your ex to new men/women you meet and thinking your ex is better
25. Letting your doubt that you will find a new relationship lead you right back to your ex
26. Putting the relationship up on a pedestal (Don't see your relationship through rose-colored glasses.)
27. Staring at your phone and hating it when there are no new messages (Stop getting disappointed every time the phone rings, and it is not your ex. This is toxic!)
28. Drunk-dialing your ex
29. Calling your ex while sober (The emotional hangover is even more terrible.)
30. Emailing your ex
31. Texting your ex
32. Stalking your ex's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Myspace, FourSquared, and Instagram accounts
33. Stalking your ex's friends on said social networking sites
34. Having rebound sex
35. Finding excuses not to shower, exercise, or otherwise take care of yourself.
36. Avoiding all your friends
37. Going back again for another pink slip (Do you really want to give your ex the opportunity to reject you again?)
38. Wondering if your ex has changed

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39. Wondering if your ex loves someone else more than he/she loved you.
40. Wondering if you were the best sex your ex ever had
41. Thinking your ex is the best sex you've ever had
42. Keeping photos of your ex in your home (You do not need to be reminded of your ex multiple times every day.)
43. Failing to erase all the photos albums of you and your ex on Facebook
44. Calling your ex's mother or sister "just to say hi"
45. Bringing up your ex in conversation every time someone starts talking about dating or relationships
46. Calling your ex from blocked numbers just to hear his or her voicemail
47. Checking your ex's old accounts (Amazon, phone bill, email, etc.) that you may still have passwords for
48. Having joint custody of an animal with your ex (Someone just needs to take the pet.)
49. Trying to live together until the home you co-own cells
50. Beating yourself up because you are frustrated every time you have a setback

**Action Steps To Help You Realize Your Relationship Just Got Whacked**

***Get rid of the evidence.***

You don't have to be Mafioso to know you've got to do *away* with anything that would prove you are guilty of a crime. You know what

should be a crime? Holding on to photos and objects that remind you of your ex. The last thing you need is to be reminded of your ex with a look at your phone, computer, or around your home. You do not need to see the images of the two of you in happier times. Seeing them will only activate the part of your brain that makes you long for your ex. If you can't bear to box up the photos, at least put them in a drawer that you don't open. If you are really brave, you can do what some people swear by--*burn them*.

You may not want to delete photos from your social media pages, but you should strongly consider doing the inevitable sooner rather than later. Just save the images on a CD or flash drive so you can look at them at a much later time. The random objects, gifts, or pieces of clothing that remind you of your ex or belong to your ex need to be dealt with. The best thing to do is just get them out of your sight. If you don't get rid of them, you are only holding on to pain.

***Stai Zitto: Enforce a strict no contact policy.***

That's right: Shut up, already! Cutting off all contact with your ex can be one of the most difficult parts of your recovery. Take it from the girl who has blocked and unblocked the same phone number way too many times, it is absolutely necessary for at least for the time being.

Contrary to all the breakup stories in *People* magazine, you should not try to be friends with your ex right away. It is naive and emotionally taxing to pretend you can instantly switch from romantic to platonic. Any premature attempt at friendship will cause more damage to your relationship, ego, heart, and maybe even your reputation. Speaking of damage, this is what will result if you text or email your ex at this time. If you do not adhere to this rule, you will discover that in retrospect, your words-whether they were written drunk or sober- will make you cringe. You are still extremely emotional and not thinking clearly about your ex. If you drunk-dial, your emotions are even more intense and your judgment even more impaired. This could lead to bad things such

as having sex with an ex, which is clearly a MAJOR violation of the no contact rule.

Face it: There is really no reason to be in touch when the relationship is over and you are trying to get over it. You don't need to be there for your ex's needs; you need to tend to your own. If you are tempted to initiate contact--or have an ex who will--you need to call your phone company and block your ex's number. Then you need to block your ex--and possibly his or her friends and family--on Facebook, Twitter, email, etc. No contact means **no contact**.

***Get real through the written word.***

At this point, you need people and evidence to remind you of reality. It may be helpful to go back and read an email or text conversation leading up to the breakup. If you keep a journal, this is a perfect time to read old entries to get a clear picture of the demise of your relationship.

As someone who has kept journals since age 11, *I can't stress enough just how effective journaling post-breakup can be*. If you don't keep a journal, you should start writing in one, as it will help you keep track of your feelings and any interaction with your ex. It will be a tool to let go of the past and stay focused on the present reality. After all, if you wrote something down in black and white, you can't really deny that it was true.





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