

Avoiding Rebound Relationships Following Divorce

Objective

To identify the signs of a rebound relationship and avoid this situation following your divorce.

What to Know

If you are freshly divorced and entering the dating scene, you might be tempted to rush into a relationship. But getting involved too quickly after the end of your relationship may not be best for your emotional wellbeing.

A rebound relationship refers to a situation where someone who recently ended a serious romantic relationship gets involved with someone else despite not being emotionally healed from the breakup. The person's reactions might be based on how they conducted themselves in the previous relationship, and they are still working through issues raised by that breakup. They might compare dating partners to their ex, fear commitment, or feel insecure about being single. Rebound relationships often involve the following problems.

- You are unable to see your situation clearly because you badly want to be in a new relationship.
- You confuse sexual chemistry with love.
- Fixating on someone new can be a way to deny or ignore your distress.
- You do not put in the time getting to know the other person or allow the relationship to grow in a healthy and organic way.
- You say things you do not mean, including "I love you," because you confuse infatuation with love.
- You make promises you cannot keep, like committing to be "together forever" before you even know them.
- Your expectations are not reality-based.
- You spend too much time with the person you are dating, ignoring other important relationships.
- You quickly get bored because you initially got caught up in the emotional thrill or lust.
- The need for stability and love can lead to ignoring or missing "red flags."

While most rebound relationships are harmless, they can postpone your recovery. In other words, escaping through a rebound relationship prevents you from gaining insight into the reasons your marriage ended and the lessons you need to learn.

Is it impossible to avoid rebound relationships after divorce? Rebound relationships are, by definition, almost always brief. If you are free from your past relationship (for example, the divorce is final), you have been working on your divorce recovery, and you feel ready, you might begin dating while being mindful of the following tips that can help you avoid a rebound relationship.

- 1. Avoid dating newly-divorced people – especially if they have not recovered from their divorce.** You can certainly date people who are divorced, but if they seem bitter about the divorce or fixated on their ex, then they might not be ready to date.
- 2. Avoid recreating your past.** Since you are divorced, some aspect of your marriage did not work. You might not want to pursue new partners because they remind you of your ex, but remember – your new partner cannot replace your ex.
- 3. Put yourself and your needs first.** Avoid compromising your needs because you feel vulnerable. If you find yourself repeatedly compromising your wants, needs, feelings, or finances to keep your new partner happy, you might be involved in a rebound relationship.
- 4. Play the field.** You may not know what you want after your divorce, so the best way to avoid a rebound relationship is to explore. Before you settle down or make a commitment, go on a few dates, and identify what you like (and what you do not like!).
- 5. Focus on divorce recovery.** Find a new hobby, join a gym, and enjoy the company of loved ones. Coaching or counseling can help you through the healing process. It takes time to recover and gain a healthy perspective on why your marriage ended.
- 6. Stop focusing on your ex.** Venting about your ex to a new partner is a sign you are not over your ex. If you find yourself doing this, you might want to consider the new person a friend rather than a romantic partner.
- 7. Gain insight into why your marriage ended.** Exploring why your marriage ended can help you establish healthy romantic relationships in the future.
- 8. Become comfortable with being alone.** Feel at ease being alone and enjoying your own company.
- 9. Give yourself time.** Most people need time to recover after a divorce. If you enter a new relationship too soon, you might have more difficulty establishing trust and a strong emotional bond with your new partner.

If you find yourself in a rebound relationship, consider ending it. Your divorce was both painful and a learning experience, and this breakup will be a learning experience as well. Spend time learning about you, your life, your values, who you want to be, and what you want.

What to Do

Answer the following questions.

Have you actively processed the divorce in a healthy manner? Why or why not?

Have you learned from the experience? What did you learn? Be specific.

Do you feel ready to date? Why or why not?

Are you uncomfortable being alone? Are you lonely? Explain.

Are you insecure about being single? Describe what you are experiencing.

Do you rely on others to validate your worth?

If you are newly divorced and involved in a relationship, do you think you are rebounding? Why or why not?

Are you are involved with someone you suspect is on the rebound? Why?

Are your needs being met in this relationship?

Does the relationship make you feel like your best self?

Does this person have the capacity for the kind of connection you want? What kind of connection *do* you want?

Do you feel lonely in this relationship?

If you decide to start dating within the first year after your divorce, have an honest direct conversation with your new partner. Some questions you might ask of yourself are:

- What are my intentions?
- Are my expectations realistic?
- Is there a chance this might be a rebound?

What are some questions you want to ask your new partner?

If you are having difficulty answering these questions, or find you are uncomfortable discussing this with your new partner, ask a loved one or relationship coach to walk you through the conversation.

Who can help you? _____

Next, write down the thoughts, ideas, questions, and so forth you want to include in this conversation.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful).

What did you learn from this exercise?
