

THE BROKEN HEART TOOLKIT
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1: WHY DOES IT HURT SO BAD?

We are like snowflakes, individually different to each other, and the same can be said of our relationships. Yet, like the little girl who watches from her bedroom window with wonder and excitement as the snowflakes fall to the ground in their billions, every flake appears to be the same. But as every kid is taught at school, every snowflake is unique. It's only on closer inspection under the microscope that we see this, and yet we also learn that snowflakes form in the same way, governed in their commonality by the natural laws of physics.

Like trying to describe every individual snowflake, it wouldn't be possible to describe every human relationship in a book. The author would have long turned to dust before they could even scratch the surface! It's simplistic to suggest, given the complexity of us and our relationships, that any one book alone can be the solution to a broken heart. It can, however, like a map or a compass, provide the reader on life's journey with the knowledge and tools needed to find the way from a dark place to the light. The decision on which direction to take, however, is up to the traveler.

The primary aim of this book is to help the reader build a stronger and more resilient sense of emotional independence. Many of us have 'merged' on a very deep level with the object of our affections and feel lost when a relationship ends. The natural law – the 'physics', or as I like to call it, "the mechanics" – of a broken heart works very similarly, in principle, to that of an **addiction**; we are 'bound or devoted' to something or someone, and a real or imagined need is not being met. This in turn causes us to go into a state of emotional **withdrawal**. And it's a painful state to exist in. It can cause us to act in harmful and damaging ways, both to ourselves and others (**obsession**)... but I'll talk more about that later in this chapter. I just wanted to get this simple concept across from the beginning of the book, as it forms the intrinsic foundation of it.

What is it that makes us feel that we cannot live without a certain somebody in our lives? Again, we're all unique individuals. For some of us, it comes down to the fact that something was missing in our lives when we were children. Love and nurturing for a child is a strong need, yet sadly many of us didn't get what we needed, and it can lead to problems in later life. Many of us decided that when we were old enough we would find someone who could give us the love that we seemed to lack for ourselves. If someone could give us this, and just love us, wouldn't everything be OK? Wouldn't the emptiness, the void inside finally be satisfied?

Maybe we're attracted to people who aren't going to be there for us or we're drawn to people who are unavailable (physically and emotionally), who fear intimacy, avoid emotional

entanglements or have a fear of being smothered and engulfed by another person? Inevitably, for people with these traits it leads to yet another abandonment, and an ongoing quest to find ‘the one’ – you know, *The One*.

Of course, not everyone’s emotional issues have their roots in childhood. We may have had an idyllic childhood, receiving all of the love, care, kindness and nurturing that every kid deserves. We may honestly be able to say to ourselves that our upbringing hasn’t contributed to our unhappiness whatever. Yet, what many with a broken heart do have in common is that they’ve invested most of themselves and their happiness in another person. Their emotional wellbeing comes from an external source, as opposed to coming from a place within. If, as many of us do, we feel a void inside of ourselves we sometimes fill it with the presence of another person, or with obsessive thinking about another person and other often destructive compulsions to try to make ourselves feel better, to not experience the void, to remove ourselves from our pain and reality. However, the end result of this behavior is often only a temporary fix – we always need more! In the end, it has an adverse effect on us and others around us. Longer term, in cases where drink and drugs are involved, this behavior can potentially lead to illness and sometimes death.

When we see clearly the pattern of our behavior, we can try to do something about it. But firstly, we have to recognize it. As I’ve mentioned, there is no one-size-fits-all solution and our relationships are as different as we are from each other. I can, however, speak from my own experience – now, you may or may not identify but it does set the scene for describing the ‘mechanics’ of a broken heart which pretty much works the same for all of us when a relationship is in trouble or has ended.

I’ve been lucky enough to have been deeply in love with two people. The endings of both of these previous relationships were amicable separations, and, for want of a better word, “normal”. Then I met “The One”. I’d never felt with anyone the way I felt about this new person and although it lasted only a month and a few days (which is nothing, really. It’s the kind of thing that happens in school playgrounds, and seems childish to talk of it now in terms of it being a ‘real’ relationship), I experienced emotional pain when it ended like I’d never felt before.

When the relationship finished, it felt as if a limb had been ripped off. I physically writhed around on my bed most nights instead of sleeping because of the deep, emotional, granite-hard core of pain that I was experiencing. I couldn’t understand what was happening; I had found ‘it’, and then ‘it’ had gone. I thought I would never find ‘it’ again. This terrified me. It felt as though all was lost. I’d never experience love again.

My behavior, to anyone looking in from outside, must have seemed quite psychotic. I would call my love interest all the time, send texts, some declaring undying love, others that were just plain nasty. I would try anything to elicit a response, even if it was a negative one –

hard to do when someone is ignoring you and not answering their cell! All I could think about was them, nothing else. I couldn't eat very much, and I lost weight. I felt sick to the pit of my stomach all the time and I would burst into tears at the slightest thing. I thought that I'd never stop feeling the way I did back then. It was as if my life was over. I couldn't accept what had happened – more than that, I'd gone from loving them to such searing hatred. If I couldn't have them, then I didn't want anyone else to, either! I started behaving in a way that I'm not proud of.

At this point I need to put into context some of the language I'm using. These words might be misunderstood, perceived negatively or may even completely revolt the reader, but being in love isn't always red roses and those of us who have had a broken heart know it. It might be difficult at first to apply these words to one's self. However, they very effectively describe the keystone concepts outlined in the next section of this chapter; The 'Mechanics' of a Broken Heart, (otherwise also termed 'The Cycle'). The words in question are; **obsession**, **addicted/addiction** and **withdrawal**. Let's now look in turn at what each literally means.

Obsession n. 1 the state of being obsessed. 2 an idea or thought that obsessed someone. ^(1a)

Obsess v. preoccupy continually or to a troubling extent. Be constantly worrying about something. ^(1b)

Addicted adj. 1 physically dependent on a particular substance. 2 *informal* devoted to a particular interest or activity: *he's addicted to computers*.

- ORIGIN C16: from the obs. adj: addict **'bound or devoted'**. ⁽²⁾

Withdrawal v. cease to take an addictive drug. ⁽³⁾

The 'Mechanics' of a Broken Heart work in a very similar way to addiction. There's no substance involved, but there's another person who becomes a '**need**', obsessive thinking about that need and the emotional pain experienced when we're cut off or deprived of the person we're 'addicted' to. The emotional withdrawal from a person can feel like going 'cold turkey', like an addict needing a drug that can't be supplied. In the following description of The 'Mechanics' of a Broken Heart it's important to fully understand the context in which the language is used. The words; **obsession**, **addicted/addiction** and **withdrawal** for most of us are unattractive and not labels that we would want to apply to ourselves, but to those who think this I point out the 16th Century definition of what an addict is; "**bound or devoted**". Could these words be applied to you?

Approach the next section with an open mind, and half the battle could be won. There is the potential to make major progress if you get a grasp of understanding what I am about to describe.

Ask yourself honestly:

Can I identify 'The Cycle' at play within myself?

*Is the emotional pain I'm experiencing, the ache I feel inside because I'm going through **withdrawal** from another person, because I miss them and believe I **need** them?*

Do I want to break 'The Cycle'?

The 'Mechanics' of a Broken Heart ('The Cycle')

1) Possibly there is a degree of absence of self-worth, the presence of low self-esteem, (sometimes as a result of neglect or abandonment as children, and an inability to care for one's self). This rule won't apply to everyone.

2) We seek self-worth and validation from others. We seek someone who will look after us and fulfil our emotional needs. Our happiness is dependent on another person.

3) Maybe we're attracted to people who aren't going to be there for us, who are unavailable in some way and who usually have a mixture of the worse traits of our parents. The reason we do this may be to try to resolve old issues. Again, this rule will not apply to everyone.

4) When we get even a small amount of 'love' or attention from another person, we feel worthy and validated in the absence of our own self-worth. Here we are looking EXTERNALLY for the source of our happiness.

5) The attention and 'love' we have received becomes a **need** – we see it as a vital, intrinsic component of our emotional wellbeing, believing that the only person who can give us it is the person we are in love with.

6) We become more needy, seeking reassurance that we are loved. The person we're in a relationship with may give us cause to doubt (perhaps they've had a bad day and are 'snappy', they don't call us when they say they will etc.), or we ask if someone loves us and don't believe them when they say they do.

7) The person who has provided us with 'love' and attention at some point – usually in the early courting stage of the relationship (or in the bedroom, even if it's only a one-night-stand, bearing in mind that some of us choose people who are not going to be there for us emotionally, who are unavailable in some way or who maybe fear intimacy themselves) – feels engulfed by our neediness and our wanting of reassurance that "everything is OK".

8) Either the person we have connected to ('merged' with) withdraws emotionally but remains in the relationship, trying to change the level of intimacy, or they leave the relationship altogether. Alternatively, we might sabotage the relationship in the misguided belief that by doing this we have some control (motivated by fear), and that doing this won't hurt so much. We leave the other person first because it seems apparent to us that our lover wants to leave us. We do this because we think it will be less painful. Both behavior patterns, however, lead to the **withdrawal** stage, the place in 'The Cycle' that causes us to hurt so much.

9) We go into a type of withdrawal when the person who was providing us with 'love' and attention leaves us, and we experience emotional pain. The withdrawal is like coming off of a drug and going 'cold turkey'. (Sometimes the emotional pain we experience is old pain from our childhood, and may be connected to past neglect, and/or abandonment, and/or our parents' separation, and/or their divorce, and/or the emotional absence of one or both of our parents, leading to an eventual abandonment of self.)

SO HERE'S WHERE IT GETS REALLY INTERESTING...

In our pain, we start to obsess about the person who has gone from our life. Perhaps we still have some contact with them, although it may not be very positive contact and may have taken the form of the cold shoulder, arguing or mutual abuse. To us (maybe we're attracted to emotionally unavailable people), this is intimacy of a sort – something is better than nothing, we rationalize – and we believe on some level that having this 'intimacy', even if it's negative, constitutes some sort of relationship. We still can't get enough of them; like a drug, we crave, yearn and long for them. We cling onto the slightest crumbs of hope and fantasy that they will come back to us, that they'll realize they've made a terrible mistake. Even these vain hopes are a form of delusion and denial.

Our hope often stopped us from progressing through withdrawal and getting well. Often, it was only when we realized that our love interest had started a relationship with someone else were we jolted into reality, finally letting go. We began moving through the pain with a degree of acceptance, however reluctantly. This for some is the end of 'The Cycle'. That is, acceptance. However, for others it made the pain and obsession worse. They may potentially (at worst) become the parody of the "Bunny Boiler".

10) Another sub-cycle within the main cycle can start at this stage, or at any point during the relationship when we experience withdrawal. When we obsess and fantasize it is a way of escaping from our painful feelings, a trick we play on ourselves.

Unfortunately, it usually only serves to make the pain worse for us. The obsession can turn into compulsion, and we pursue the focus of it, trying to get them to change their mind. All sorts of unattractive behavior can possibly start here!

11) One of two things usually happens; either the focus of our obsession comes back to us (usually out of fear of what we will do to ourselves or to them!), taking us back to the beginning of 'The Cycle' and restoring our supply of 'love' and attention, or they move further away from us in every way, physically and emotionally. If it's the latter, then the withdrawal continues and the depth of it may intensify.

The danger is that theoretically we can go on like this forever, exhibiting increasingly scary and unacceptable behavior and tactics. We become desperate for the focus of our obsession to take our pain away.

12) At this stage of 'The Cycle', even though we may not see it at the time, we DO have a choice. Either we continue feeling terrible, seeking 'love' and attention from an EXTERNAL source, or we try to develop an INTERNAL sense of emotional independence, enabling us to move on.

It's through the development of this aspect of self that we break 'The Cycle'. When we abandon ourselves, we are not taking responsibility for our own emotional wellbeing but we have it within our power to interrupt 'The Cycle'. But we have to choose to do this.

(IF YOU CHOOSE CHANGE THE BROKEN HEART TOOLKIT IS AVAILABLE TO [BUY FROM AMAZON](#))

References

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(2) p15, Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, Twelfth Edition, 2011.

(3) p1657, Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, Twelfth Edition, 2011