



Romantic Breakups, Heartbreak and Bereavement—Romantic Breakups

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ABSTRACT

This literature review suggests that romantic breakups may lead to bereavement symptoms including intrusive thoughts and attempts to suppress them and insomnia as well as morbidity factors including broken heart syndrome and immune dysfunction. Although the broken heart syndrome has mimicked real heart attacks, angiograms revealed no clogged arteries or permanent heart damage. Compromised immune function may result from reduced vagal activity and increased cortisol and catecholamines leading to increased inflammatory cytokines and decreased natural killer cell activity. The model proposed here is that romantic breakups result in the loss of a person as a regulator of stimulation and arousal modulation that can then lead to these physiological and biochemical effects. These data highlight the complexity of romantic breakups, heartbreak and bereavement and the need for multi-variable research on these systems both before and after the breakups occur.

KEYWORDS

Romantic Breakups, Heartbreak, Bereavement, Social Regulators

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