

A Valentine's special: Mending a broken heart

 By [Chamendran Naidoo](#)

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I've always been a sucker for love, dear readers. Nothing lifts me up more than that light feeling of having a special lady to pour your doting heart into as she cares for you in the gentle way she does, showering her love in return. But this isn't about that. If you've ever been in love, oh reader, then you've probably been out of it too. Somewhere deep within the chorus of your favourite Percy Sledge song, the feeling disappears, the love is lost and you find yourself eating half a tub of ice-cream, wondering if it was really "her, not you".

At this point, the meaning behind the saying, "It's better to have and lost than never to have loved at all", finds itself in the toilet along with the flowers, love letters and the chocolate hearts. Then, like clockwork, comes the pain. In fact, my dear readers, the emotional course of heartbreak has been paralleled to the stages experienced after the death of a loved one (and often just as intensely).

The lonely path

As one walks the path seemingly less travelled by love, the common emotive phases include at any point:

- **Shock and denial:** An often emotionally paralytic phase, where you may deny the reality of the situation and nurture a feeling of bewilderment. The way forward during this phase is to accept the loss and allow the meaning of the event to sink in.
- **Pain and guilt:** Physical pain, tears, anger and negotiation all come out to play. You find yourself reliving the "good ol' days" and wishing to turn back the clock. Often, the preoccupation with the lost love causes social withdrawal, becoming engrossed in work, living in the past and trying to find a scapegoat. To prevent yourself from standing outside his/her window in the midnight rain, discuss your feelings openly with friends and family. Avoid bottling up your emotions (and you may avoid the court order too).
- **Depression, reflection, and loneliness:** The most noticeable period whilst suffering a broken heart. This stage is characterized by a perverse cloud of sadness and lackluster. You may experience tiredness, poor sleep and poor appetite. Slowly however, the feelings of emptiness start to work their way out of your system as you begin to accept the loss and resume day-to-day obligations. Isolating yourself from people is normal and facilitates reflection.
- **Acceptance:** You've dealt with the shock, emptied the tissue box onto your moist cheeks and spent close to a month on the peripheries of society. Finally, the prospect of enjoying new experiences enters your soul and you're ready to 'give' of yourself again.

The literal broken heart

Can the pain of losing that little love break your heart, literally? Other than the possibility of precipitating a heart attack through severe emotional stress, during which a poor baseline function of the heart is usually already present, an interesting condition has been documented to occur in an otherwise normal heart which has suffered recent loss.

Takotsubo cardiomyopathy, commonly referred to as "The Broken Heart Syndrome", presents identical to a heart attack and is handled as such up until the point of cardiac catheterisation, where the heart is found to be completely normal other than mild ballooning at the apex of the ventricle.

The mechanism of the syndrome is postulated due to the release of noradrenaline and adrenaline in response to the severe stress of heartache. This is postulated to 'stun' the heart, precipitating the dilation. Echoing the treatment of any heartbreak, Takotsubo cardiomyopathy requires time, not medication, to heal.

Mending a broken heart

"Time heals all wounds" and a broken heart is no different. By allowing sufficient time to heal the hurt of loss, you are able to reflect on your feelings and work through any questions you may have. Talking to others and participating in activities that make you happy is imperative to a smooth transition into being able to 'accept' love again.

When you find yourself ready to expose yourself to potential loss again, you'll know you're healed. You'll see that hazel-eyed hottie across the room from you and feel the old spark return. With a spring in your step, through smiling lips, you ask: "Is this seat taken?"

ABOUT CHAMENDRAN NAIDOO

Chamendran Naidoo works as a General Practitioner in the SA Navy. His interests include fine surgery as well as approaching the patient as a whole in a Bio-Psycho-Social manner. He is passionate about the immersion of medicine into everyday life which he actively manages via social media fronts. Chamendran is also a co-presenter on SABC3's Dr Mbl Show. Email Chamendran on chamendran@hotmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@Chamendran](https://twitter.com/Chamendran).

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