

# How to Break out of Your Breakup Rut (Or: 15 Things to Do Instead When You Really, Really Want to Call Him/Her)

by Carrie Spaulding, CPC

If you're in a no-contact reboot period (something I highly recommend for many breakup situations), there are going to be times when it is *really* hard not to pick up that phone or send that email.

There will also be times when it feels impossible to stop [that vicious spin cycle of toxic thoughts in your head](#).

Print out this list and keep it on your bedside table, desk, or fridge until you are through your breakup. That way, when you find yourself:

reaching for that phone to call your ex in spite of yourself

constantly checking and rechecking your ex's Facebook page

or just lying in a lethargic lump on your couch, replaying the same conversations over and over in your head,

...all you have to do is pick up the list and choose something. Make yourself just do it. If the toxic breakup gremlin tries to pull you back into inaction or *unwanted* action, say, "Thank you for inviting me, but I'm busy right now."

**1. Call a friend.** During a breakup, or during any kind of major transition, it is so important to generate a list of champions—people who believe in you and support you.

As soon as you finish reading this article, make a list of friends to call when the going gets hard. You may even want to write the list on a sticky note and stick it on your cell phone.

Don't be afraid to ask for what you need. Someday, it will be your privilege to pay it forward and be on the other end of that call.

**2. Write down the advice you would give to a friend** in your situation. What affirming or supportive words would you say to a friend in your shoes? What suggestions would you make?

This is an incredibly powerful way to shift your perspective and change the voices of self-doubt that are likely to be playing on repeat. When my clients try this, they are often amazed to see what happens when they're as good a friend to themselves as they are to others.

**3. Clean something.** It can be metaphorically cleansing to physically clean something. Even if you don't enjoy cleaning, there is a special kind of satisfaction that comes from getting rid of literal grime and mess when you are trying to clear up *internal* grime and mess.

Choose one little area of your home to make “right” or complete for yourself.

Cleaning is an act of self-care. It's amazing how organizing and decluttering your physical environment can influence your feelings and mental clarity.

**4. Write.** Journal, journal, journal.

I remember clearly a time when I was trying—for months and months—to decide about whether to end a long-term relationship. One night I finally hit rock bottom. I allowed myself to completely let go in my journal.

I wrote all the thoughts and feelings I was embarrassed to think and feel. I poured out all my shame, all my anger, all my confusion, all the unpleasant and unflattering feelings that I had not let myself fully express. I wrote and wrote, and cried and cried. And then I slept and slept. The next morning I woke up and was surprised to find that, with perfect clarity, my decision had been made.

After I let myself dump it all out and go to that place, I found I could finally come out into the light.

**5. Look through photographs of yourself from when you were very young.** I discovered this strategy a long time ago, by accident, when I was struggling with a breakup. One sad day I picked up an album of photos my sister had given me of pictures from our childhood.

Looking at my own innocent face, I had a totally unexpected transformative experience. The thought that came forward, like an epiphany, was: *I was not made for this—this gloomy, dark, moping existence, basing my happiness on another person. I was a complete person before my ex, and*

*I'll be a complete person after my ex. I realized, looking at those pictures: I am enough. I have always been enough. AND—there are many, many other people in my life who love me...so I can choose to tune into that, rather than focus on one person who is gone.*

Even if this activity doesn't hit you quite as hard as it hit me that day, it can still give you a different, and refreshing, lens through which to look at yourself and your life, and offer you the bigger-picture perspective you so desperately need.

**6. Watch something funny, adorable, inspiring, impressive, ridiculous...or just plain awesome on YouTube.**

**7. Or watch something brilliant** on TED—such as [this](#), [this](#), or [this](#). Every time I watch a TED talk, I'm transported. I have ideas that I've never had. I feel connected to a larger community of dreamers, thinkers, and searchers.

**8. Sit in a coffee shop or a park.** Sometimes it's helpful just to be around other people—"among the living," as I sometimes think of it.

Even if you don't talk to anyone, just looking at other people and hearing snippets of their conversations reminds you that there are so many other people out there, and can help you to broaden your focus from that one *particular* person who's been filling your headspace every waking minute.

You may want to bring a book, a journal, or music to listen to—or you may just want to bring yourself and tune into your senses in this change of environment.

**9. Go for a walk, a hike, or a bike ride.** You don't even have to know where you're going—just get OUT! You may have to really push yourself, but once you're out, you'll likely be so glad you went.

Getting your body moving and giving your senses new input—sights, sounds, smells, and sensations—can change your whole perspective. Feeling the sun or rain on your skin, or the breeze on your face, can help you come back to life. Again, just being around other people can help to shift your energy.

And even if you can't keep the tears from flowing as you walk or ride around the neighborhood, at least there's something cinematic in the melodrama.

**10. Write someone (other than your ex) an email or snail mail card and send it.** Send a loving message to that friend or family member you've been meaning to write to. Reconnect with an old friend you've lost touch with. Write a thank-you note to someone who helped you in your career or personal life.

Writing to someone takes you out of your loneliness and into connection. Plus, it taps into your power to brighten someone else's day.

**11. Do something to help someone else.** Volunteer. Help someone with a problem. Reach out to someone.

When you are really hurting *yourself*, and feeling helpless, it's incredible how focusing on someone else's needs can help you [gain both perspective and a sense of agency and empowerment](#).

**12. Go to see live theater.** For a couple of hours, you'll be pulled out of your own story and connected to a different one. You may see yourself in the themes of the play and get some kind of insight while looking through a new lens, or you may just get a total break from thinking about yourself at all!

Something about the live setting makes it really different from watching a movie. Also, being part of the audience breaks you out of your loneliness and makes you feel you're in a shared experience...and you never know who will inspire you or make you smile. One time I went to a musical, and my favorite part of the play was the sweet old man bopping his head vigorously and clapping joyously after every number.

**13. Get professional help.** It's amazing how much faster and how *transformational* the healing process can be when you have the right support. Get the help of a therapist or coach who specializes in breakups and relationships.

Giving yourself a nonjudgmental, confidential, supportive space to work through your pain and confusion can take you from breakup to breakthrough.

**14. Exercise.** Go for a run or work out at the gym. Stretch. Do yoga.

Exercise has extraordinary benefits no matter what, but during a breakup it can be a total game-changer. Getting into your body can get you out of your head. Working out has remarkable potential to reduce your stress, and during a breakup, that alone makes it worth doing.

If you're someone who doesn't like exercising, think of it this way: *I'm going to feel unhappy/bad for a while anyway, so I may as well feel unhappy/bad and get some exercise benefits out of the deal.*

**15. Make yourself a rad mix, write yourself a love letter, make an Evidence Box,** or choose one of [these other activities](#)—they're not just good for Valentine's Day!

\* **Add to this list.** You know yourself best. What else could you do? Thinking back through other hard times, what has helped break you out of your funk? What makes you happy?