

Men's experiences with break-ups

Men Building Better Relationships Research Project
Men's Health Research Program | The University of British Columbia



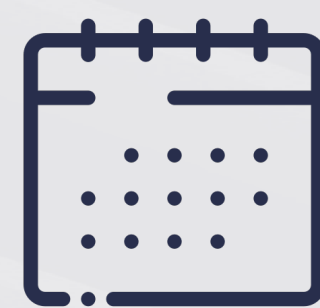
49 men
participated.



Participants were
26-70 years-old.



55% of participants
were parents.



Relationship length was
5 months to 28 years.

The Men Building Better Relationships study was funded by Movember.



FINDINGS

Communication



Self-censoring: Many men did not want to or shied away from sharing their true feelings and opinions with their partners for fear of conflict and/or the relationship ending.

Men said they wanted to learn to:

- Communicate assertively without making conflicts worse,
- Have difficult conversations to resolve issues,
- Avoid the same arguments happening repeatedly, and
- Practice regular “check-ins” or structured dialogues with their partners to resolve issues before conflicts arise.

Mental Health

33% of men scored moderate to severe depression severity.*

*10 or higher on the Patient Health Questionnaire-9.

Troubled dynamics: Men reported they had experienced many challenges before their relationship ended, including job loss, illness, bereavement, and co-parenting disputes.

Breakups: Men reported significant anxiety, depression and/or suicidality after a break-up. To cope with the transition, many men relied on substances at first and other possibly harmful behaviours to lessen feelings and/or self-medicate their distress. These strategies did not help men move on.



Emotional Awareness



Men in distressed relationships denied or monitored their emotions rather than acting on what they felt. Often men held in concerns about the relationship. When the relationship broke, men described weighty emotions including sadness, shame, anger, regret and guilt.

After-burn emotions: Following a break-up, many men found it helpful to learn how to identify, express and resolve emotions such as sadness, fear, and anger.

Finding Help

92% of men talked to friends and/or family when they needed help.

Solitary work: Some men relied on self-help books and online resources, such as podcasts and articles to get help.

New connections: Many men joined peer-based men's groups, single-dads' groups, and/or joined activities such as running groups or going to the gym to manage their break-ups. Men wanted strategies for dealing with issues such as family court and financial settlements/losses to lessen distress.

Professional services: 50% of the men got professional mental health care such as counselling and psychological services. Some men were going to therapy for the first time, while others were returning or had been in therapy long-term.



Narratives of Change

50% of relationship break-ups were initiated by men's partners. Five of these men reported accepting accountability for their relationship ending, doing intensive self-reflection, and reimagined their future.



Personal Growth

After a break-up, most men reconnected with aspects of themselves they had given up during their relationships. Men reevaluated decisions about how they wanted to live, relate, and be in the world.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Men told us they want to build better relationship skills.

New programs need to focus on helping men become ready for relationships rather than wait and only address crises in distressed or disrupted relationships. Movember is using these findings to create an online resource for men, which will be released in 2023.



We want to talk to you to understand how *you* build relationships!

We are currently recruiting men to participate in a new study, *Men Building Intimate Partner Relationships*, to understand men's experiences of and perspectives about building equitable and sustainable relationships.

We want to learn from your opinions and experiences if you:

- Self identify as a man,
- Are 19-44 years old,
- Are or were in an intimate partner relationship,
- Can speak English.
- Participation in the study involves a Zoom interview.
- Participants will receive a \$100 honorarium.
- To learn more about the study visit: bit.ly/MBIPR

If you are interested in participating, please contact Project Coordinator, Dr. Nina Gao at yuchen.gao@ubc.ca for further information.

