

When one loss takes more than one thing with it

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When my relationship ended, I kept trying to understand why it felt as though so much of my life had disappeared with it.

The relationship was one loss, but it wasn't the only one. There was my home. My business. Financial security. The plans I thought I was living towards. The ordinary shape of a life that, until then, I had assumed would continue.

One day I pictured it as a container ship.

Each part of my life had been sitting in its own container: relationship, home, work, money, future. They had looked separate, but they were all travelling on the same ship.

Why can one loss feel like losing everything?

Because sometimes one ending changes far more than the thing we give it a name for.

We say, *my relationship ended*. Or *I lost my job*. Or *I retired*. Or *I had to move*. Those descriptions are true. They are just not always complete.

A relationship can contain a home, routines, mutual friends, financial arrangements, plans for next year and a version of yourself that belonged to that particular life.

A job can contain people, structure, confidence, income and the reason Tuesday looks different from Sunday.

A move can take you away from the café you always used, the route you knew without thinking, the neighbour you spoke to over the wall and the place where your ordinary life made sense.

The event may have one name. The loss may have several.

A quiet thing worth noticing

Sometimes the size of your reaction makes more sense when you stop counting only the most obvious thing you lost.

When the whole ship goes down

For me, all of those containers went down together. And I went down with them.

I had no plans. No hope. I felt stuck and frozen by the fear of how I was ever going to find my life again.

Even the words *rebuild your life* felt enormous. What did that actually mean? Where do you begin when the thing you are trying to rebuild is your life?

I could see what had gone. I could not see what came next.

Then I went back to my container ship. Not because I had suddenly found an answer, but because I needed some way of looking at my life that did not make the whole thing feel impossible.

I put my life on paper

I took a piece of paper and divided my life into sections: friends, creating a new business, money, home, hobbies, sport, learning and personal growth.

There it was. My life, on a piece of paper.

Not a five-year plan. Not a vision of some perfected future version of myself. Just the different parts of a life that mattered to me.

Once I could see them separately, the question changed.

I no longer had to answer, *How do I rebuild my life?*

I could ask, *What can I put into this part of it?*

That was a question I could do something with.

I could think about friendship separately from money. Home separately from work. Learning separately from sport. I did not have to solve one before I was allowed to touch another, and I did not have to make equal progress everywhere.

The page had turned one enormous problem into a number of smaller places where something could begin.

One baby step at a time

At first, it was slow. Some sections had very little in them. Some were easier to begin with than others. But I could make one small move in one part of my life without waiting until I knew what the whole future looked like.

Then another.

The point was not to fill every container as quickly as possible. The point was that I could see them. I knew where I might begin, and I could notice when something was starting to change.

Slowly, the page became less about what was missing and more about what I was putting into my life.

Somewhere along the way, I realised I was floating again. There was no dramatic moment when I announced that I had rebuilt my life. It happened while I was living it.

The ship I have now

Today, I have a new life, and it fills me with joy and contentment. It is different from the one I had before. Of course it is. I am different too.

What I notice now is how much more conscious I am of what I want on board: my friends, my work, where I live, how I spend my time, what interests me and what I want to learn and create.

Not every part of life is full all the time. I do not think that is how a life works. Priorities move. Circumstances change. Something that matters enormously for a while may take up less space later.

But I no longer look at my life as one solid thing that either works or doesn't. I can see its parts.

When the old ship went down, I thought I had lost my life. I had lost the life I knew.

And when I look at this version of myself, I realise I am enjoying being her so much more.

This time, I am the captain of my ship.

Frequently asked questions

Why can a breakup or other loss affect areas of life that seem unrelated?

Because parts of everyday life often overlap. A relationship may also shape where you live, who you see, how money is organised, what weekends look like and what you expect from the future. When the relationship changes, those other arrangements may change with it.

Why can I feel stuck when I know there are things I could do?

One possibility is that several separate concerns have become one enormous question about *my life*. Knowing that things need attention is different from knowing where to begin. Even a small decision can feel connected to a much larger problem. That is not the only reason someone might feel stuck, but it was part of my experience.

What if one part of my life improves while another still feels empty?

Different parts of life do not necessarily move at the same pace. Work may begin to feel settled while home does not, or friendships may grow while money remains uncertain. One area changing does not require the others to have caught up.

Can parts of my old life belong in the new one?

Yes. Rebuilding does not require rejecting everything that came before. Some people, interests, routines or ambitions may still belong. Others may change or disappear. That distinction may become clearer as the new life takes shape.