

Coping with romance and break-ups

Breaking up with a loved one is never easy. Even when the break up is their own choice, most young people are left feeling hurt says Swinburne psychology professor Susan Moore.

Along with researchers from Victoria University and the Hong Kong Institute of Education, Moore is studying romance, break-ups and how young people handle them and is looking for more participants for an online study.

To date, more than 450 people aged between 18 and 25 (most around 21 and 22) have taken part in the survey. According to Moore, romance and break-ups are a normal part of their transition to adulthood.

"We've found that romantic relationships are very common in this age group, with only 20 per cent never having experienced one. Even among that 20 per cent, most are 'interested' but haven't quite got

around to it yet."

Breaking up is a very common experience. Three-quarters of all those who had experienced a romantic relationship had also experienced a break up (87 per cent of Australian participants and 66 per cent of Hong Kong participants.)

"No matter who initiated the break up, feelings of hurt were common with 82 per cent of study participants feeling hurt or very hurt by them," Moore says.


The study also asks about infidelity. "One-third of young people said they had been unfaithful to a partner at least once," Moore says. "What we don't know yet is whether the infidelity was the stimulus to breaking up.

"Another possibility is that it could be due to one-sided relationships, with just under half the sample so far believing that either their partner loved them more or they loved their

partner more as opposed to believing it was an 'equal' love relationship."

The online survey is part of a larger study investigating the role of romantic relationships in the lives of young people with a particular focus on break-ups, how common they are and what differentiates young people who handle them well from those who don't.

"Handling romantic relationships or the lack of them – including feelings of loneliness, unrequited love, having your heart broken – is part of the transition to adulthood," Moore says.

"It is important for parents and those who work with young people to accept these feelings and teach young people strategies for coping with the associated mood swings and emotions." 

The current online survey plus some romance 'tips' is available at: www.youthromance.com



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 Middle Park
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 Ph: (03) 9347 9422

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