

GETTING OVER A RELATIONSHIP BREAKUP:
TESTING TWO INTERVENTIONS TO FACILITATE RECOVERY

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ABSTRACT

Research suggests that individuals who have broken up from a romantic relationship and are also experiencing the transition to college may be particularly vulnerable to the stressors associated with both processes. The present study tested two online interventions aimed at facilitating recovery from a breakup for the potentially important at-risk group of first-semester college students who have experienced a recent relationship breakup. This study used a longitudinal, online methodology to assess psychological, alcohol, and sexual outcomes among 190 first-semester students who had experienced a recent breakup. Participants were randomly assigned to an online chat, online journal, or no-treatment control condition. Hierarchical linear modeling was used to analyze trajectories over time as a function of interventions vs. control group. Consistent with expectation, those in either intervention group reported greater declines in anger, loneliness, weekday alcohol use, drinking to cope, and rebound sex than the control group. However, analyses of the underlying mechanisms of the interventions were mixed. In sum, these two interventions had modest effects in facilitating recovery from a relationship breakup. Refining the interventions has implications for health professionals on college campuses who deal primarily with first-semester college students.