

Literature and Coping Skills
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Lecture 29
Love, Heartbreak, and Healing-I

Hello, everybody. I am Ajit K. Mishra, your course instructor for Literature and Coping Skills. I am here again, with a new module. This module is on Heartbreak. And we all know heartbreak is one of the biggest problems that we are facing today. And it has, in fact, disturbed us for a long, long time. So, heartbreak is everywhere. It is all pervasive, it is very, very complex. And it is a major problem surrounding us.

This heart, which has wonderful strengths, can also turn out to be extremely fragile at times. And that is one big reason why this heart is also susceptible to heartbreaks or the broken heart syndrome. So, as I walk you through the different segments of this module, you will gradually discover various aspects related to heartbreak.

And then I will also tell you how this particular phenomenon, this particular mental challenge can be taken care of, with awareness, understanding and the development of proper coping skills and strategies. So, heartbreak, we all know, is a wave of grief, anger, confusion, low self-esteem, and maybe even jealousy, and all of this at once.

So, lots of things actually happen during heartbreak. Some people might have had a romantic relationship that ended before they were ready, or they could accept and then others might have strong feelings for someone who does not feel the same way unrequited love. Or maybe a person feels sad and angry when a close friend ends or abandons the friendship.

All the causes of heartbreak may be different, the feelings of loss are the same. Whether it is the loss of something real or the loss of something you only hoped for, we can describe heartbreak as a feeling of heaviness, emptiness, and sadness. So, with that in mind, let us start with this module.

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The slide features a yellow background. On the left, there is a blue heart icon with a white arrow pointing clockwise. To the right of the icon is a bulleted list. The first item, 'Love, Heartbreak, and Healing-I', is enclosed in a yellow box. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner. A man in a dark blue shirt is standing on the right side of the slide, gesturing with his hands.

Overcoming Heartbreak

- Love, Heartbreak, and Healing-I
- Love, Heartbreak, and Healing-II
- Robert Browning, "The Last Ride Together"
- Derek Walcott, "The Fist"


Image Source: Theounproject

So, this module is called overcoming heartbreak, because heartbreak can actually cause huge problems to people who suffer this particular problem. Therefore, it is very important that we learn how to overcome heartbreak, so that it does not continue to disturb us for long. And that is how this entire module has been designed. This has four segments, starting with love, heartbreak and healing part one, and then the same love, heartbreak and healing part two.

Then I will be taking you to Robert Browning's, "The Last Ride Together" to show how in that particular poetic composition we can develop certain coping skills, so that we can either minimise or overcome the problem of heartbreak. And then finally, I will take you to the Derek Walcott "The Fist". And I will also show you how we can in fact cope with the problem of heartbreak.

But before I start, let me tell you all that heartbreak is not necessarily a mental disorder, but it has all the potential to quickly turn things into mental challenges or mental problems. So, if not taken care of, it can promptly turn into a huge mental challenge for each of the sufferers. Therefore, it is important that we understand heartbreak well, and we also understand how to manage the problems associated with heartbreaks, so that we can overcome heartbreak, promptly and quite convincingly. So, let us take a look at the first component, as I am going to focus on this particular segment today in this lecture. So, let us start with that.

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Heartbreak

- The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines heartbreak as crushing grief, anguish, or distress
- We feel heart broken when we lose someone or something we loved or wanted very much
- Intense dejection results from experiences of failure, loss, exclusion, rejection, separation, betrayal, humiliation, negligence, disappointment
- The intense emotional stress or pain one feels at experiencing great and deep longing

Image Source: Thenounproject

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Heartbreak, as I have already told you all, is one of the major problems that is being faced, especially by the young today, because they are the ones who are more susceptible to the onslaught of heartbreak as they are starting their lives out. So, if we start with lexical definition of heartbreak, this is one that I have taken for you from the Merriam-Webster dictionary, which defines a heartbreak as crushing grief, anguish, and distress.

So, all those elements together, in fact, constitute the feeling of heartbreak. There has to be crushing grief, one needs to feel as if one is being crushed by a heavy truck, or one is being pounded and one is subjected to severe physical and mental torture. So, there has to be crushing grief, and then anguish, the kind of pain that is associated with that kind of feeling. And then finally, the result that is the distress, that is the result of a heartbreak. So, all these elements together, form or constitute the feeling of heartbreak.

We feel heartbroken, when we lose someone, or something we loved or wanted very much. So, in this case, a heartbreak is very, very close to trauma because our both these problems, in fact, deal with a similar kind of problem or similar kind of experience that we call pain, the physical and the mental pain. So, heartbreak is generally caused when we lose someone or something that we actually were extremely fond of, we actually loved or liked very much.

So, the loss, especially a sudden loss of that particular thing, or that particular person will cause heartbreak. So, in this case, the loss may not be due to death. This loss may be due to a broken relationship or a variety of other things. I will come to those things as well.

So, intense dejection results from the experiences of failure, loss, exclusion, rejection, separation, betrayal, humiliation, negligence, and or disappointment. So, these are some of the things that can also cause a heartbreak or intense dejection. So generally, heartbreak has been associated with the breakup in a romantic love or romantic relationship. But that is not the only kind of heartbreak, heartbreak can also be caused by any of these feelings or a combination of these experiences as well.


So, it can be an experience of failure, somebody has prepared extremely hard for a certain type of test and the person could not clear that test, the person fails ultimately. So, the person can experience heartbreak. Similarly, loss, exclusion, or even bullying, rejection, social rejection or interpersonal rejection can also cause a heartbreak in people.

And separation somebody who is being separated from one's relatives, family members, even friends can also feel heartbreak, sometimes when we get so attached with our colleges and universities, that the very thought of getting separated after completing our studies there causes heartbreak in us and actually when we get separated from those places, we experienced heartbreak as well.

So, betrayal can cause heartbreak, humiliation can also cause heartbreak, negligence, is or the major reasons of heartbreak, especially in relationships or in which one partner is absolutely negligent of the other partners. And the other partner can experience a heartbreak. And disappointment is also a major contributor to heartbreak.


So, the intense emotional stress or pain one feels in heartbreak is in fact, the result of a deep and great longing for that particular relationship, for that particular thing, that particular object or person. So, the emotional pain or stress is, in fact, the result of this particular longing. So, we long for things when we lose them, when we are separated from them. So, that is the reason why people experience heartbreak as well.

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- Heartbreak causes a large amount of stress, especially when the loss is sudden and unexpected
- This stress affects how we feel emotionally and physically, and it also takes weeks, months or even years to recover
- Broken romantic love is extremely painful which renders sufferers susceptible to depression, anxiety and, in more extreme cases, post-traumatic stress disorder
- An understanding of why we need love makes it possible to understand heartbreak better

Image Source: Theounproject



So, heartbreak, as you know, causes a large amount of stress, especially when the loss is sudden and unexpected. If a loss is not sudden, it was expected, it was anticipated, or people were in fact planning for that particular thing. For example, there are certain things called planned divorce when both the partners talk to each other or discuss their problems, and they finally decide that they cannot stay together. So, it is better that they bid farewell to each other, they part their ways in an amicable manner.

So, in such cases, that separation or mutual separation is not sudden, unexpected. Therefore, that will not cause any heartbreak. It was well planned, and it was well discussed. So, whenever a separation or a heartbreak is sudden, that will cause a large amount of stress. So, this particular stress that is caused by this sudden loss, or sudden heartbreak is generally felt emotionally and physically. And it also takes weeks and months and even years to recover, so that is the reason why I pointed towards this particular aspect of heartbreak at the beginning of this lecture, that if we do not know how to overcome the pangs of heartbreak, it might turn out to be a mental disorder for us. So therefore, it is very important that we understand these aspects of heartbreak.

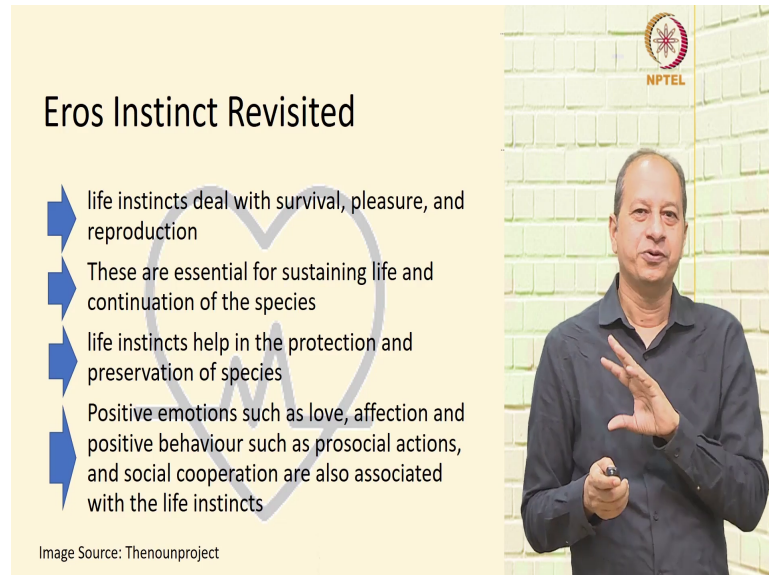
So, the stress that results from heartbreak can be felt emotionally and physically. And that is one big reason why we generally associate this particular experience, this particular feeling with our heart as if the heart aches, it hurts. So, we need to check whether it actually hurts or aches or not, we will be getting to see that in a while.

So, broken, romantic love is extremely painful. And this is one big reason why heartbreak is generally associated with broken romantic love. And the other aspects associated with this particular experience are generally ignored. So, when this happens, the sufferer becomes susceptible to depression, anxiety, and in extreme cases, post-traumatic stress disorder. So therefore, it is very important that people learn how to overcome the pangs of heartbreak, it helps.

And then we need to understand why we need love because most people often ask, if heartbreak is the result of a broken, romantic relationship, there is absolutely no need to go for broke, I mean romantic relationships. Thus, we can prevent a heartbreak from taking place, so that can sound like a very, very good argument.

But then we need to check whether this can be done or not. Whether love is a need or love can actually be regulated. So therefore, it is very important for us to understand the role that love plays in our lives, the importance of love in our lives. So, if we can do that, we can understand the heartbreak phenomenon better.

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The slide features a yellow background with a large, faint heart outline. On the left, the title "Eros Instinct Revisited" is displayed. Below it, four blue arrow-shaped bullet points list the following text: "life instincts deal with survival, pleasure, and reproduction", "These are essential for sustaining life and continuation of the species", "life instincts help in the protection and preservation of species", and "Positive emotions such as love, affection and positive behaviour such as prosocial actions, and social cooperation are also associated with the life instincts". At the bottom left, it says "Image Source: Thenounproject". On the right side of the slide, there is a photograph of a man in a dark blue shirt speaking, with an NPTEL logo in the top right corner.

So that way, we need to revisit the Eros Instinct. You all know that we have two instincts, the Eros and Thanatos instinct, the life drive and the death drive. So, the Eros Instinct is in fact, the love drive, the love instinct, the need, the urge, the desire to live and love. Why is love so very important? I have told you that this life instinct that is the life drive or love drive helps

us deal with survival, pleasure and reproduction. So, this is the instinct that is responsible for these activities.

Survival, we need to survive, because we need to develop that kind of love for our existence, unless there is that love we will not like to survive. So, our survival is very closely associated with the idea of love. And then pleasure, we need pleasure, we derive pleasure from various activities. And in order to derive pleasure from various activities, we also need love.

And then finally, reproduction. For reproduction, procreation, which is one of the biggest responsibilities of these species. Therefore, we need love, because love and mating makes it possible for us to reproduce and procreate. So, therefore, we need love for all these things or this life instinct is, in fact, responsible for all these things.

And then these things are, in fact, essential for sustaining life and the continuation of the species. So, we need to sustain life. And, you know, by now that we are evolutionarily designed to protect our lives, to sustain our lives, and to continue this species through procreation or reproduction. So therefore, it is very important that we understand the importance, the significance of love in our existence.

So, these love instincts or life instincts also help in the protection and preservation of species. We protect ourselves from our imminent danger, challenges, threats. And, by protecting ourselves from these challenges, threats to our existence, we in fact, preserve ourselves and our species. So, see, how we humans have discovered numerous ways to protect ourselves, so that we can preserve our species and we have gone to such great extents to do this.

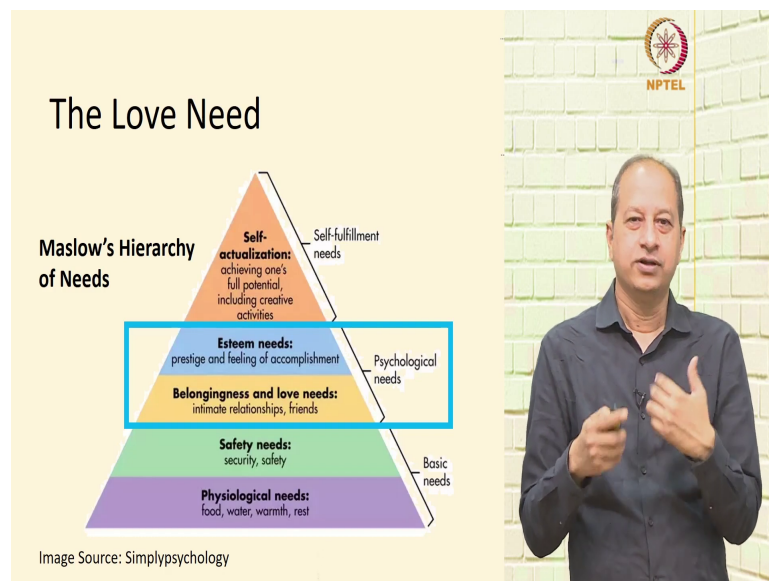
So, positive emotions, such as love, affection, and positive behaviour, such as prosocial action, and social cooperation are also associated with life instinct, that means life drives. So, love and affection is a positive emotions or emotions with positive valence, and then our positive behaviour and to pro social actions, they all require us to experience love, so that we we can think of preserving this life, protecting this life and leading this life in a proper manner through our interpersonal and social associations or relationships.

Therefore, Eros Instinct, or love, instinct or life instinct is very, very important because Eros is love. So, we need love, to survive, to exist and to move on in life. So therefore, the need for

love cannot be compromised and therefore, we all vie for love. And since there is this particular need for love, we cannot evade the risk of heartbreak.

So, if there is no love, there will be no heartbreak. If there is love, there will be heartbreak. So, either we do not have love, and we will be happy without any heartbreak, or we go for love and will experience heartbreak now and then, so that is a very, very natural phenomenon. There is nothing very, very shocking about it.

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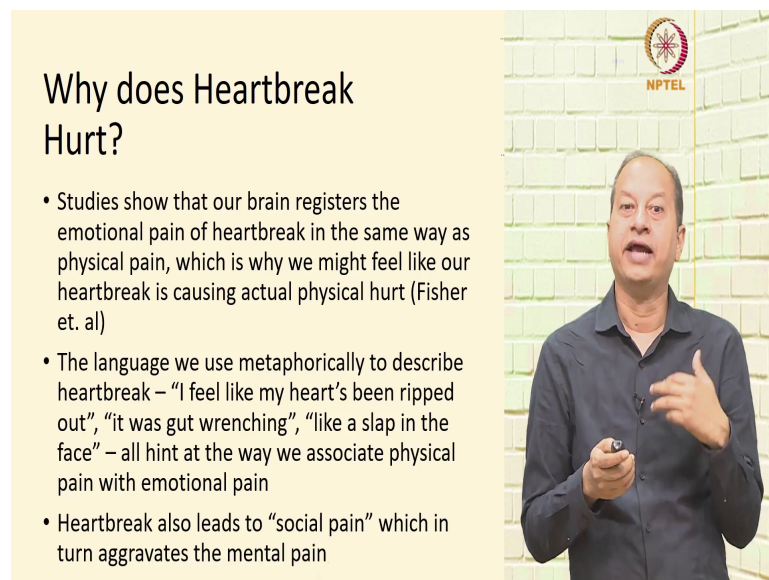
So, the need for love is very, very important. Again, if we approach the whole idea for the need of love through Maslow's Hierarchy, the need hierarchy, when we take a look at Maslow's need hierarchy, we start with the basic needs, like the psychological needs and the safety needs. And then we actually begin with physiological needs like food, water, warmth, rest, and then we move to the safety needs like security and safety. So, these are in fact, our basic needs.

Once these basic needs are fulfilled, then we think of the psychological needs. So, these physiological needs and psychological needs are very, very closely associated needs. When we come to the psychological needs state, we experience or we feel the need for belongingness and love. That is exactly where we all experience love needs, need for intimate relationships, that we can term romantic relationships, friendship even, and then friendship, family building, or family making, or forming families.

And then that way, preserving this species, procreating, reproducing. So, we can preserve, we can protect, preserve these species, only when we can fulfil these psychological needs, starting with belongingness and love. So, love is in fact, a very powerful need that we cannot do awareness of.

And once this particular need is fulfilled, we can think of the other needs, the higher needs, like they are self-fulfilment needs, or self-actualization needs, so that is the reason why love is such an important need. We all need that particular experience, that particular emotion to move ahead in life. So therefore, the need for love is an important need. And that is the reason why love has to be there, irrespective of whether or not heartbreak results as a consequence. Love has to be there.

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The slide features a yellow background. On the left, the title "Why does Heartbreak Hurt?" is written in a bold, black font. Below the title, there are three bullet points. On the right side of the slide, there is a video inset showing a man in a dark blue shirt speaking and gesturing with his hands. In the top right corner of the slide, there is a small circular logo with a red and white design and the text "NPTEL" below it.

Why does Heartbreak Hurt?

- Studies show that our brain registers the emotional pain of heartbreak in the same way as physical pain, which is why we might feel like our heartbreak is causing actual physical hurt (Fisher et. al)
- The language we use metaphorically to describe heartbreak – “I feel like my heart’s been ripped out”, “it was gut wrenching”, “like a slap in the face” – all hint at the way we associate physical pain with emotional pain
- Heartbreak also leads to “social pain” which in turn aggravates the mental pain

And now, we can take a look at why heartbreak hurts? Does it hurt like any physical pain? Let us take a look at that. A study that was conducted by Helen Fisher and others Arthur Aron and Lucy Brown, established that our brain registers the emotional pain of heartbreak in the same way as physical pain, which is probably the reason why we feel like a heartbreak is causing actual physical hurt, so that is the reason why we generally approach the idea of heartbreak through the metaphors of physical pain, that is one big reason. So, this study in fact established that there is a huge or great correspondence between mental pain, emotional pain and physical pain. That means if somebody pours hot water on somebody's forearm one will definitely experience pain and thereafter, if the same person is made to watch the photo

of his or her lover, the person will experience some pain in the brain, emotional pain, mental pain.

And the two experiences, these two experiences, in fact occur in the same regions of the brain. And that proves the fact that there is a correspondence between physical pain and mental pain. And then this is how we in fact approach the idea of pain, which is generally associated with heartbreak. We generally use metaphors. I feel like my heart's been ripped out; my heart's been crushed. It was gut wrenching. It was like a slap in the face. All these responses, all these depictions point towards the fact that we generally associate physical pain with emotional pain. So, there is a great correspondence between physical pain and emotional pain.

For a long time, people believed that we need to depict our experiences of heartbreak, metaphorically. Metaphors for physical pain and that is how we can in fact express our emotional experiences or mental pain. And it has nothing to do with the physiological aspects. But the study by Fisher and others proved that it is not just a metaphor.

It in fact, causes pain in some body parts, especially the heart, it causes some pain in the heart and its neighbourhood. So therefore, heartbreak, and therefore broken heart, as if the heart is broken, like any other limb, and the pain that is associated with it. So broken heart or heartbreak, they in fact cause physical pain. This particular emotional pain that we all experience whenever we have a broken heart promptly translates into physical pain as well.

So, heartbreak also leads to social pain because it is the result of social rejection, interpersonal rejection. Therefore, it actually results in social pain, and which in turn aggravates the mental pain. So, when we look at heartbreak and the results, we generally come across mental or emotional pain, social pain, and even physical pain. So, pain of all kinds. So, in order to understand this pain phenomenon better, we need to focus on the idea of mental pain.

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Mental Pain

- Psychic pain, emotional suffering, psychache, psychological pain, soul pain
- Mental pain is no less real than other types of pain related to parts of the body, but has not received adequate attention
- A person feels psychological pain at the moment when he/she becomes separated from a significant other (Bakan)

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So, let us take a look at mental pain. And how else the same thing, the same experience is depicted. Mental pain is also depicted as psychic pain, psychological pain, emotional suffering, psychache, and soul pain. So, pain is everywhere, it is all pervasive. So, we cannot do away with the idea of pain when we talk about heartbreak, because ultimately, we need to overcome the pain that is associated with heartbreak if we have to successfully overcome heartbreak.


So, the mental pain is no less real than the other types of pain related to the parts of the body that means there is a correspondence between the physical pain and the mental pain. But this particular aspect has not received adequate attention in academic research, but there are people who are in fact looking into this particular phenomenon, and they are in fact conducting some ground breaking research into this particular field, but it has not received adequate attention from researchers.

So, a person feels psychological pain at the moment, when he or she becomes separated from a significant other, that means, whenever we are separated, either from our love interest, from our friends, or as I told you in the beginning of the slideshow, whenever we are separated from a place with which we have developed a great affinity, a sense of belonging we experience this kind of pain, psychological pain, especially at that particular moment and then the time that follows.

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- Mental pain is an aversive state of high self-awareness of inadequacy (Baumeister)
- Psychache is an acute state of intense psychological pain associated with feelings of guilt, anguish, fear, panic, angst, loneliness and helplessness (Shneidman)
- Emotional pain is a state of 'feeling broken' that involves the experience of being wounded, loss of self, disconnection, and critical awareness of one's more negative attributes (Bolger)



Mental pain is not aversive state of high self-awareness of inadequacy. Now, this is a very interesting phenomenon. Now, that was found by Baumeister, who suggests that mental pain is in fact an aversive state, in which a person experiences a heightened self-awareness of inadequacy. That means, there are occasions when heartbreak leads to suicidal thoughts and actual suicide.

And there are several such instances in which a person or a partner in a broken heart state commits suicide, bids goodbye to the world and leaves forever. Now, this particular behaviour is largely due to this high awareness, or sometime this is hyped awareness of inadequacy, that means a person begins to blame oneself, tells oneself that I am inadequate, I am to blame, I am worthless, I am useless and all this has happened because of me. I have experienced heartbreak because of me, not because of the other partner because I am inadequate, I am worthless, I am useless.

So, psychic, is in fact an acute state of intense psychological pain, which is associated with feelings of guilt. We can relate it to Baumeister's assumption, inadequacy, anguish, fear, panic, angst, loneliness and helplessness. Again, a series, a set of negative thoughts, which follows heartbreak, so that is, again, informs us that psychic or mental pain is in fact, a serious problem.

And then we come to emotional pain, which is a state of feeling broken, you feel as if you are totally broken and fragmented. And that involves the experience of being wounded, loss of self, disassociation, disconnection and critical awareness of one's more negative attributes.

So, when we look at all these findings, we can derive one common pattern, one common structure, that is a feeling of inadequacy, self-hatred, self-blame, a feeling of worthlessness, uselessness.

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So, that brings us to the idea of a very, very important phenomenon, that is mental pain. So, if we start with the consequences of mental pain, we can say, deep sorrow or sadness; mental pain, that results from heartbreak, or broken relationship, that can be broken friendship or broken, romantic relationship. So it finally leads to deep sorrow or sadness.

So, that is something which cannot be avoided. It is natural, whenever we experience heartbreak, whenever we are separated from our loved ones or the loved object, we experience tremendous mental pain or mental suffering, psychic pain, emotional pain, psychological pain, we all experienced that, so that in fact leads to deep sorrow or sadness. That promptly pushes us into survival mode. Now, we are faced with a survival question, an existential question, What do I do? How do I come out of that? So that turns out to be a trap for me. How do I come out of that? What do I do in order to ensure my safe return to the safe mode?

If a person does not find ways to overcome that particular situation, that particular condition, one will be trapped in that deep sorrow or sadness, which will promptly turn into complicated grief, bereavement, mourning, trauma, and a variety of other things, leading to major

depressive disorders and PTSD as well. So therefore, it is important that people realise that this particular mental pain needs to be overcome.

The second aftershock of mental pain or consequences of mental pain is loneliness. Whenever a person experiences heartbreak, loneliness automatically dawns, and there is no escaping this particular experience. Because you suddenly lose the object of your attachment, it may be a person or maybe a thing, the object of your attachment.

So, your attachment is gone, not received. That means, in the presence of that particular object, or person, you were happy, you experienced a strong life drive, you had a reason to extend your life, preserve your life, protect your life, for that particular object of your attachment. Now that suddenly, the object is gone, you are lonely- so that experience of emptiness will take over you. And you will be overwhelmed by that particular sense of emptiness. And that will result in loneliness. People may withdraw, people may disconnect themselves, because they will not be comfortable, they will not be comfortable in the company of others, they will not know what to do, and how to find new attachments, or new objects of attachment, they will not be able to do so.

Therefore, they will experience loneliness and then grief, grief will take over you. It will overwhelm you because there are occasions when people begin to grieve, mourn, lament, cry, wail, shout, yell, do a lot of things when they experience mental pain, which results from heartbreak. So, there is a grief stage as well.

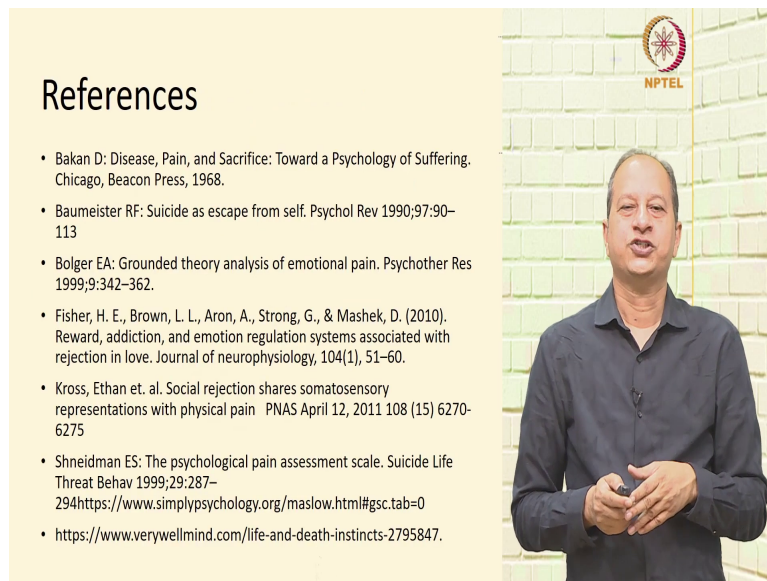
And then people begin to analyse the reasons, the causes, and most often, people end up blaming themselves. Indeed, I am to blame. I have a lot of inadequacies in me. Therefore, this relationship has come to an end. Therefore, I am to blame. So, self-hatred, blaming or self-blaming, or feeling of worthlessness, uselessness is what actually happens in this stage. And then all sorts of negative emotions, all sorts of negative emotions take over you.

Then shame, shame is in fact associated with social pain because once a person is rejected, once a person fails in some kind of relationship, and the person is subjected to heartbreak, a great amount of shame is also involved in that particular experience and feeling because you are ashamed of going out, you are ashamed of meeting people for the fear that they will undervalue or underestimate you, your social presence.

And that is why shame also takes over the person who experiences heartbreak and mental pain. And then we come to distress, it can lead to long periods of distress, where people are absolutely dejected because they are rejected. And this distressed conditions will keep you in a trapped state. And then that can also lead to panic.

You will, begin to panic, you will begin to show symptoms that are very, very or keen, or similar to other mental disorders, especially depressive disorders. So, all these together can actually push a person who experiences heartbreak and the mental agony or pain associated with it to a state of permanent disorder or mental disorder. So therefore, it is very very important that we get to know these things- so that we are far more aware and we find ourselves in a better position to minimize and take care of the onslaught of heartbreak.

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So, with that we come to the end of this lecture. I hope you liked the things that I discussed with you. I will be extending this particular discussion on heartbreak where I will come up with another lecture on the same segment. So, thank you very much for joining me.