

What is the science behind heartbreak?

When her husband left her after more than 25 years together, science writer Florence Williams says her body felt like it had been plugged into a faulty electrical socket.

“I can almost describe it like a brain injury,” she says. “I wasn’t sleeping at all. I felt really agitated.”

Williams wanted to understand her physical reaction to the breakup, so she began speaking to scientists in the U.S. and England about the connection between emotional and physical pain. Her new book, [*Heartbreak: A Personal and Scientific Journey*](#), investigates the ways in which extreme emotional pain can impact the heart, the digestive and immune systems, and more.

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Williams notes that falling in love actually stimulates the parts of the brain responsible for producing stress hormones — perhaps as a way to prepare for heartbreak. The brain creates these stress hormones, she says, “so that when our partner leaves or sort of disappears, we get so agitated that we are motivated to go find them or feel so grateful when they come back.” In other words, we’re biologically primed from the start to feel stress when a relationship ends.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.**](#)