THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

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The Signs and Symptoms of a Nervous Breakdown

The signs and symptoms of your nervous breakdown are an indication that you’ve reached your limit. You may feel you’re falling apart, but I promise you - you’re not going mad and you’re not insane!

You’re just at breaking point - completely stressed out and at the end of your tether.

We all have our limits and there’s a limit to how much you can cope with too. Maybe life has just thrown too much at you. Your resources - internal and/or external - are no longer able to deal with all that’s on your shoulders. You’re exhausted. You can no longer deal with all that stress and it’s no wonder you feel like you’re falling apart.

I hope to help you make sense of what’s happening to you, or someone you care about - your partner, perhaps. I’m including this article in my relationship advice site because all too often relationship problems are part and parcel of a breakdown.

I’m aiming above all to reassure you...
You’re not really ‘broken’. Your body/mind is already working to heal itself. You’ve found this page, haven’t you? Most of you is still working perfectly fine - you’re keeping it together enough to know you need more information.

So, read on to learn more and increase your understanding of what's happening to you...

By the end of this article you'll know...

a) **How** all that stress led to you feeling unable to cope

b) **What** a 'nervous breakdown' exactly is

c) **How to connect with an online expert counsellor right now**

d) **What** to do to get over it

e) **When** to see a doctor immediately (see Part 3)

What you need to know right away is that **there’s no shame** in feeling like a cry-baby, or like you’re weak and completely out of control. You may feel like you’re going crazy right now, but you will recover. The symptoms of this burnout will disappear. *But - it won’t happen overnight.*
Symptoms of a nervous breakdown

Maybe you’ve heard about someone “having a nervous breakdown” and you’ve asked yourself: what is it? So, let me explain...

First of all - the terms I’ve used so far to describe what you’re going through wouldn’t normally be used in a professional setting.

I’ve used them here because I know that thousands of people a month are searching for them. I want to be sure that I reach everyone who’s looking for reliable information - hence the more colloquial language.

You may suspect that you are - or someone you love is - suffering from shattered nerves (another description) and you don’t know what to think or do.

This kind of disorder (don’t let that word worry you either) may have slowly built up over time. Or you might have suddenly been caught out unexpectedly (though it would have been lurking for some time and I suspect you know that!).

See how many of these symptoms you recognise in yourself (or your loved-one):
1. **Irregular** heartbeat - you can feel your heart pounding. Or maybe you're aware that your heart is beating really fast. You may be terrified that you’re having or have had a heart attack. Yet test results show you’re just fine. BTW - if you haven’t had it checked by a doctor you should do!

2. **Tensed**/painful muscles - no wonder... they’re working overtime without you being consciously aware of it. They’re at the ready to help you run away from the (imagined) disaster, constantly in fight/flight mode.

3. **Clammy** hands and armpits - your body works hard to cool you down. However, that adds to your distress as you fear shaking hands and other people noticing how much you’re sweating. You now know what a 'cold sweat' is!

4. **Dizziness** or lightheadedness - your blood is drawn to the major muscle groups to ensure they're well-fed and can deal with the (imagined) catastrophe.

5. **Trembling** or shaking - you may feel these are the most embarrassing symptoms as you’re convinced other people will notice.

6. **Upset** stomach and bowel problems - your body/mind reacts as if your life's in danger. Digestion is secondary to survival - your body wants to get rid of whatever it doesn’t immediately need or takes too much energy to deal with. Therefore diarrhoea, frequently needing to pass urine, feeling sick or vomiting are normal under the circumstances.
7. **Exhaustion** - all your energy is being used trying to manage or even just cope with this crisis - physically and mentally.

8. **Pains** - unexplained aches, pains, cramps and illness - your body/mind is out of balance and/or existing health issues draw all your attention. I wouldn't be surprised if, *in your imagination*, you're already at death's door (it wouldn't hurt to have a health check though - even if only to reassure yourself that all is well).

9. **Coughs and colds** - you seem to be catching every bug that's floating around. The prolonged stress is lowering your immunity.

10. **Tension headaches** - tight muscles, constant worry, mind and body out of balance - you're feeling poorly most of the time.

11. **Restlessness** - you can't seem to sit still long enough to draw a few long breaths. You're in a constant state of agitation.

12. **Sensitive hearing** - normal sounds may feel too harsh, loud or shrill.

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**Overactive thyroid?**

*If in addition to the symptoms mentioned on this page you're also experiencing unexplained or unexpected weight-loss, you're needing to go to the toilet all too frequently and you're sensitive to heat, do yourself a favour - get yourself checked out by a doctor.*
12 Mental symptoms that make you think you’re going mad

1. **Anxiety** about every-day things, from the sound of the doorbell to going shopping or having to go to work - it’s all too much.

2. **Panic** and **phobias**.

3. **Inability** to cope with stuff you wouldn’t have thought twice about before - you can’t think straight, have difficulties organising yourself and are frightened others will catch on. You may even have been accused of being uptight or highly strung.

4. **Loss of libido** - you feel ‘dead below the waist’! This is often a much-ignored early sign as it’s so often blamed on other things.

5. **Impotence** - and a sense of shame about that to boot (see no 4).

6. **Sleep** problems - not being able to fall asleep, frequently waking up and not being able to go back to sleep due to racing thoughts, general restlessness, irregular heartbeat and constant worry.

7. **Withdrawal** from loved ones - my clients describe it sometimes as living in a bubble. It feels you’re incapable of even following a conversation.

8. **Irritability** and angry outbursts - you have no spare capacity and can’t meet your own essential needs, let alone even the most minor requests for anything at all from others, including your children or partner.

9. **Difficulty** concentrating - you probably can’t even read a page in a book, or keep your mind on the headlines in a newspaper.

10. **Depression** - this is almost a given when your life seems to be unravelling (see my pages on depression - links further down).
11. **Excessive dreaming** *(what your dreams really mean).*

12. **Your memory is like a sieve** - that part of your brain that (partly) deals with memory is over-burdened. Also because you may have trouble concentrating you’re just not absorbing everything that’s being said or what you’re reading or writing.

No wonder you’re finding it hard to cope!

Now let’s take a look at the **causes of you 'falling apart', the fears and the signs to watch out for.**

Rather know what to do about it straight away? **Hop over to this page.**

**You now know what** the signs and symptoms are.

Looking back, then, you can perhaps see when you first started to feel 'not your normal self'. Maybe you're now aware of how sustained stress decreased your resilience - almost by stealth. Perhaps you knew that you were pushing the limits, but thought you had no choice and that you'd get over it.

### 7 Common causes of a nervous breakdown

Here are the most common contributors to a mental meltdown:
1. a sudden **relationship disaster**, such as the disclosure of an affair
2. **separation and divorce**
3. a **traumatic event**, or perhaps a series of traumas
4. a **drip-drip effect** finally taking its toll (not unusual in emergency service personnel and when caring for someone who suffers from a long-term illness)
5. other **work-related stress** (See here how your managers should be helping you)
6. **not having eaten and slept enough!** (Click here to read what Doris Lessing discovered when trying it out for herself)
7. **domestic violence** (See my page on the **signs of an abusive relationship**)

Sometimes people are completely caught off guard - never having suspected that life could come crashing down so dramatically. They, perhaps like you, would never have identified themselves as not being able to cope, or being prone to a 'mental breakdown'. They may have considered themselves strong and able to cope with anything.

(You can learn more about how we put our bodies under stress on my page on **adrenal fatigue treatment**.)
Having a 'complete' breakdown?

... are terrified of the doorbell  
... don’t want to open the post anymore  
... can’t get out of the front door  
... can’t stand in a queue  
... can’t even get anywhere near to your place of work  
... suddenly have found yourself somewhere, without a clue why you’re there or what you were meant to do - and feeling terrified

I know all of the above is scary, but it is all part of this condition.

I promise you, you will get better and do all those things again in time without that terror. But you may need a bit of help to speed up your recovery. [See this video](#).

Feeling anxious or are you having full-blown panic attacks?

Are you terrified of doing anything or going anywhere in case you get a panic attack? We’ve established that you’re likely to constantly feel restless and on edge. But, unfortunately for some people their survival system goes into complete overdrive - they get panic attacks.
Take a look and see how many of the following symptoms you recognise...

10 Signs and symptoms of a panic attack

1. a **pounding, racing heart, chest pain** - you may well worry about having a heart attack
2. **difficulty breathing**, fearing you’re going to choke
3. **feelings of unreality**, as if you’re not of this world
4. a sense of **detachment** from yourself
5. **fear of going crazy**, of ‘losing your mind’
6. a terrifying **fear of dying**
7. **constant worry about being very ill**
8. feeling completely **out of control**
9. becoming **terrified of getting another panic attack**, avoiding anything you think could be a trigger
10. All this is leaving you feeling **jumpy** - easily startled and on edge all the time - just in case it should happen again

We really want to calm your **fear** of further panic attacks as that fear adds yet another layer to your suffering. You can really do without that right now.

If you think you’re going to have a heart attack - know that most likely you won’t. Neither will you faint as your blood pressure shoots up when you’re stressed. People who faint do so because their blood pressure drops.
You're really not falling apart! CLICK ON THE LINK a brilliant method to stop your panic attacks.

**Shouldn't you see a doctor as soon as possible?**

It makes sense to have a check-up from your doctor, mainly to exclude the possibility that you have an underlying medical/physical condition.

The symptoms of a nervous breakdown can be very frightening indeed, but it’s very likely you’ll recover without needing medical intervention (though psychological help may be needed).

You know now that we, as professionals, understand the symptoms of a breakdown, including panic attacks. You now also know that you are not 'off your rocker' or 'crazy', and that you're not alone!

I promise you - you can recover.

Please note, if you’re also suffering from substance abuse, your treatment plan and road to recovery will need to include overcoming that addiction.

You can find ways to speed up your recovery on my page: How to Get Over a Nervous Breakdown.
A note of warning

The US Food and Drug Administration has warned that certain behaviours are known to be associated with SSRI's (a class of antidepressants) including the following symptoms: anxiety, agitation, panic attacks, insomnia, irritability, hostility, impulsivity, severe restlessness. Any one of these symptoms is likely to make your emotional breakdown feel even worse. So, be sure that you are well-informed before taking this kind of medication.

Instead of taking antidepressant (SSRIs), explore my pages on depression. All that advice on how to overcome depression also applies to getting over a nervous breakdown.

You will need immediate medical care if...

- you have (suddenly) become completely hyper - manic - you need immediate help. You sleep very little, you’re over-happy, speak fast, maybe shop more, maybe spend more, lack any judgement, your thoughts are racing - you generally feel on a complete ‘high’. You may also feel extremely anxious. This may all happen after you have felt depressed for a while.
● you have a history of severe mental health problems and you feel yourself slipping towards a mental breakdown - do reach out to a professional you feel you can trust.

● you’re addicted to drugs - it’s best to mention this straight away. I understand if you feel embarrassed about that, but your health and your future happiness are at stake. You’re too precious, your particular skills are too valuable to lose - we need you to be involved in this world in a meaningful way

● you are feeling suicidal.

If you’re concerned for someone else, then you really need to make sure they get professional help as soon as possible. Take immediate action if you know that person has already planned how and/or when he/she is going to commit suicide.

Why you’re not going ‘crazy’

As a counsellor, I often see people who are particularly worried about their brain or mind letting them down. In case you are too, here’s a very short video clip that explains how we know that you’re not alone in being terribly forgetful, ineffective, disorganised and unable to focus.

Now watch this video about stress
Your nervous breakdown symptoms are in fact **temporary**. Your body/mind’s reaction is entirely normal under these - for you - abnormal circumstances.

**How to overcome a mental breakdown**

**The best thing you can do now is just accept** that those signs and symptoms of a nervous breakdown won’t disappear overnight. Stop fighting them. Instead, it’s time to look for ways to **speed up your recovery**.

The next step? Now that you have all the info about what exactly a mental breakdown is, it’s time to get motivated and **take control of your recovery**. You can do it!

*My very best wishes for a speedy recovery from that breakdown.*

*Elly*