



Exorcising Your Ex: How to Get Rid of the Demons of Relationships Past

By Elizabeth Kuster

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How not to make your current boyfriend pay for what your ex did to you.

What to do with the ratty bathrobe your ex left hanging in your closet.

On-target lists of movies, books, and songs appropriate for each phase.

Quick fixes, harmless revenge tactics, and much, much more!

These sassy tales from the trenches will help you get over nagging negative memories quickly, effectively, painlessly. And failing that, they'll give you a few cheap laughs.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #373528 in Books
- Published on: 1996-04-23
- Released on: 1996-04-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.44" h x .70" w x 5.50" l, .47 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 192 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

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Chapter 1

The Aftermath

An A-to-Z Guide to Post -Breakup Mood Swings

Warning: You will be experiencing fits of rage, helpless laughter, and projectile sobbing, often simultaneously.

In the period immediately following a breakup, every emotion in the book will rear its ugly head. One minute you will feel lazy, sleepy, depressed; the next you will feel productive, energetic, euphoric. One minute you will feel like killing your ex in a murderous rage; the next you will feel like eating a big hoagie.

Lest you think that any of these emotions are weird or psychotic, let me assure you that *of course they are!* They're also quite normal for someone who's just suffered a breakup.

Here are some of the post-breakup emotions and urges you may experience:

A: Anger. Not only will you be angry at yourself, your ex, and the world at large, you'll also be angry at anyone who smiles at you, tells you to cheer up, or says hello. (*Tip:* Avoid Hare Krishnas.)

B: Blame. At first, you'll be tempted to blame yourself for the breakup. Therapists say this is necessary and even healthy, because it makes you feel like you have control over what happens to you. I say forget all that: It's much more fun to blame others. Blaming your ex is, of course, a given. Other good people to blame:

* Your parents.

* Saddam Hussein.

* Howard Stern. And don't forget those old blame standbys

* overpopulation,

* the greenhouse effect, and

* bad karma. If all else fails,

* blame PMS.

C: The urge to clean. I'm not talking about your average everyday dusting and sweeping here. I'm talking about a cleaning *frenzy*. Not only will you find yourself vacuuming the inside of your file cabinet, you will find yourself vacuuming *inside each file folder*. If you have any empty envelopes in your apartment, you will *vacuum them out, too*. And this is *after* you've cleaned the inside of your mailbox and dusted every book you own, page by page.

Cleaning is therapeutic, true. But I think the real impetus behind the post-breakup cleaning frenzy is the desperate urge to get rid of *every single skin flake your ex ever shed in your apartment*.

D: At some point, you will feel like drinking yourself silly. While going on a bender can be self-destructive, it's also an excellent anesthetic. (They don't call it "drowning your sorrows" for nothing.) Remember: *Alcohol kills brain cells*. Killing brain cells results in *memory loss*. Therefore, if you drink enough alcohol, you will eventually *forget that your ex ever existed*.

Tip: Don't make drinking too much of a habit, or you will be spending a good portion of your life waiting for aspirin to work.

E: Embarrassment. After anger, this is probably the most common post-breakup emotion. Women I talked to reported feeling "embarrassed that I fell for my ex's lines," "embarrassed that I gushed about him to friends and family," and "embarrassed that I saw the box of tampons in his bathroom and didn't get the clue." Some were mortified about things they did during the actual breakup. "I literally got down on my knees and begged him not to leave me," said one woman. "It kills me to think that his last view of me was so pathetic." Another woman drove by her ex's house at least four times a day. "He lived at the end of a dead-end street, so every time I drove by, I had to do a three-point turn in his driveway," she said. "He finally came out and told me to stop it."

F: You will feel free. Suddenly, your life will be filled with new options. Any behavior that your boyfriend loathed can now become part of your daily repertoire. Hooray! You can eat cookies in bed! You can eat Chef Boyardee ravioli right out of the can! Wear your rattiest underwear! Play your *Saturday Night Fever* album! Let the dishes pile up! Yay! No more pretending that you like his mother! No more little hairs in the bathroom sink! No more empty ice trays!

You will enjoy this newfound freedom for about ten minutes. Then you will burst into tears.

G: Guilt. If you were the one who did the breaking up, you will feel very guilty. Don't let this get you down! Remember, guilt is the basis for all that's good in the world (namely, sex, religion, and *Court TV*).

H: Hunger. After the breakup, some of your pain may be referred to your stomach, which will respond by screaming, "Feed me! Feed me till I explode!" These screams will be followed by intense cravings for various comfort foods (defined as "processed foods, typically bright orange in color, which are highly unhealthy and therefore incredibly expensive").

I myself have experienced this phenomenon. After one breakup, I wandered through the grocery store in a virtual daze for two whole hours. When I got home and started putting the food away, I thought at first that I'd grabbed someone else's bags by mistake. There were *three* boxes of kids' cereal, a jar of Peter Pan peanut butter, two boxes of Kraft macaroni and cheese, a jar of Clausen dill pickles, and a jar of Marshmallow Fluff. Yes, *Marshmallow Fluff!* Apparently my inner child had done the shopping.

Some women say that they actually *lose* their appetite after a breakup. I'd like to smack them, but I don't

think I can roll off the couch.

I: You will feel impulsive. You will hunger for new experiences, especially those that would shock your ex. "Belly dancing class? Sounds great!" "Skydiving? Sure!" "A fullbody tattoo of the Leaning Tower of Pisa? I'm ready!" (*Tip:* Stay away from army recruiters while you are in this frame of mind.)

Note: After a breakup, you may also feel **ill**. According to one therapist, "Many wounded people experience physical symptoms. Some suffer headaches, sleeplessness, hallucinations, rectal bleeding, and gastrointestinal problems."

To which I reply: *Rectal bleeding???* Ewww!

J: Jealousy. Typical causes of post-breakup jealousy:

- * Seeing your ex with the woman he dumped you for.
- * Seeing your ex enjoying himself with his friends.
- * Seeing a guy who *looks* like your ex enjoying himself.
- * Seeing any couple who looks at all happy.

Note: Breaking up with a guy will not prevent you from feeling jealous. As one woman put it, "When I saw my ex with another woman the week after I broke up with him, I was insanely jealous. I couldn't believe that he could get over me that quickly."

K: You will want to give your ex a knuckle sandwich. One woman found this urge so overwhelming that she joined a **kung fu class** so she could release this negative energy in a safe environment. Then she proceeded to **kick the shit** out of her instructor.

L: Lots of people laugh when they're nervous or upset; it's sort of a survival instinct. After a breakup, the strangest things may set you off. "I'm going to be alone for the rest of my life," you'll be thinking. Suddenly you'll have a vision of your eighty-year-old self buying Depends undergarments, and you'll start laughing so hysterically that nearby strangers will pound you on the back.

Tip: People won't understand that while you may be laughing on the outside, you are actually crying on the inside. Therefore, it might be a good idea to carry a Watchman with you at all times. That way, whenever you're struck by a sudden giggle fit, you can point to the tiny TV screen and pretend that someone on a sitcom just said something funny. Of course, this will probably require **lying**.

M: Memories. Everything you see and hear for those first few weeks -- Hungry Man TV dinners, Calvin Klein commercials, the **Muzak** version of "**Muskrat Love**" -- will remind you of your ex. For one woman, it was Teva sandals. "My boyfriend wore them all the time, and I *hated* them," she said. "Then, after we broke up, I saw them in a store window. One minute I was fine, and the next minute I was sobbing hysterically." For another woman, it was seeing a guy *spit*. "My ex could spit really high in the air and then catch it in his mouth, like Judd Nelson did in *The Breakfast Club*," she said. "He could plan it so that the spit would land on my head no matter where I dodged. It was so cool."

Tip: Whenever warm memories like these come back to you, *immediately* replace them with a mental picture

of your ex at his most disgusting, stupid, and infuriating (preferably all three). Remember how he grunted while watching the bikini-clad women on *Baywatch*? Good. All pleasant thoughts of him should now be flying right out of your head.

N: You will feel like you've reached your **nadir**, or lowest point. (Not to be confused with *Ralph Nader*.) Then you will feel like taking a **nap**.

O: You will feel like composing an **ode** to your ex. The ode will probably start out polite, but eventually it will degenerate into **obscene oaths**. *Do not mail this ode to your ex!*

Note: If writing an ode seems too highbrow, try writing a limerick. Here's one to get you started:

There once was a man from Venus

Who fell in love with his penis.

I wasn't impressed

(It was four inches at best)

And so I said, "Been there, seen this."

P: Phobic. Common post-breakup phobias: androphobia (fear of men); anuptaphobia (fear of being single); genophobia (fear of sex); bromidrosiphobia (fear of body odors, real or imagined). Worst-case scenario: genoandrobromidrosiphobia (fear of having sex with a man who has body odor).

Note: If you ignored my advice and mailed your ode to your ex, you will no doubt be writing a **palinode** (in lay terms, a poem retracting something said in an earlier poem).

Tip: If you're looking for something that rhymes with "sorry," try "Mata Hari."

Q: You will feel like **quitting the relationship thing altogether**. Even keeping a cactus will seem like too much of a commitment.

R: Regret. If your ex was nice, you will regret the times you were mean to him. If he was mean, you will regret the times that you were nice to him. If he was really, really mean, you will regret giving him your phone number in the first place.

S: You will feel **suicidal**. After a breakup, I have been known to say to friends, "Should I meet you there, or should I stay home and slit my wrists?" and, "I would fling myself out the window, but I live on the first floor."

Before you do anything drastic, consider this: Isn't it possible that, instead of wanting to kill yourself, you really just want to kill that little part of you that still likes your ex? If so, why should the rest of you suffer?

I say, be kind to yourself. Treat yourself to a **shopping spree**, preferably with your ex's credit card.

T: Lack of **trust**. After a breakup, you may become suspicious of everyone and everything. This is known as Richard Nixon complex.

Scenario: A new guy asks you out. Your thoughts:

- * "This guy just wants to get into my pants."
- * "This guy is just trying to find out where I live, so he can rob me blind."
- * "My ex must have sent this guy to spy on me."

This lack of trust may be accompanied by the belief that everything is **trivial**.

Scenario: Your boss says, "Remember, we're meeting with our biggest client tomorrow." Your reply: "Who cares? It's not like we're doing *brain surgery* here."

Scenario: Your best friend says, "Brad Pitt is *completely nude* in his next movie!" Your reply: "Big deal. In two billion years, the sun will explode and the world as we know it will cease to exist."

Note: One positive side effect of this fatalistic attitude is that it will depress everyone around you, including your **therapist**.

U: You will feel **undesirable, unbalanced, unapproachable, unappealing**, and just plain **un**. These feelings will make you so apathetic that you will stop shaving your **underarms**. Your roommate will endure your sprouting tufts of armpit hair for about three weeks before screaming "**uncle**."

V: You will fantasize about going on a **vindictive vendetta** against your ex, preferably one that involves performing a **vasectomy** with a **very dull knife**.

Tip: Before following through on this fantasy, read the upcoming chapter on revenge.

W: Withdrawal symptoms. When we're in love, our bodies produce an amphetamine called phenylethylamine. Amphetamines are addictive. Therefore, it follows that you might experience withdrawal symptoms when love ends. Kicking this "relationship habit" will take time. To speed up the process, you could try following the 12-step program recommended by Alcoholics Anonymous. Or you could follow *my* 12-step program, otherwise known as the "12 Steps to the Refrigerator" program (see "H," above).

Note: Even habits that make you feel *awful* can be comforting because they're familiar. So try not to get into the habit of whining about your ex. Otherwise, your friends and family may get into the habit of avoiding you like the plague.

X: You will hate anyone who has only one **X chromosome**. If your bagel man says, "Have a nice day," you'll reply, "Screw you!" If your male doctor asks, "How are you feeling?," you'll snarl, "What's it to ya?" If your dad asks you if you want to go to a movie, you'll shout, "Scram, you testosterone terrorist! I'm sick of your kind?"

Note: Though usually short-lived, this phase is incredibly powerful. Some of its better-known results:

* The feminist movement.

* Satin-touch tampons.

* Susan Powter.

Y: You will feel like **yelling**. Yelling is very cathartic, so you should indulge this urge to the fullest. Good places to yell:

your car,

* your pillow,

* **Yankee Stadium.** Bad places to yell:

* the library,

* the police station,

* church.

Note: The urge to yell at weddings is quite understandable, but it's still not appropriate.

Z: You will feel like a **zombie**.

'zäm-be, *noun*. **1.** A voodoo snake deity. **2.** A person held to resemble the so-called walking dead; esp: AUTOMATON. **3.** A person markedly strange in appearance or behavior. **4.** A mixed drink made of several kinds of rum, liqueur, and fruit juice.

The Wild and Wacky Things That Remind Women of Their Exes

* "Star Wars, Don Mattingly, and the entire state of Iowa."

* "Lubricant."

* "The Stevie Nicks song 'Rhiannon'. He said I reminded him of Rhiannon. I later found out that Rhiannon was the name of a witch who ate her two children."

* "Ugly ties, chewing tobacco, and Frank Sinatra."

* "Vinegar. He loved it so much he drank it right out of the bottle."

* "Oscar de la Renta perfume. The night we broke up, I threw my brand-new bottle at him. It broke and soaked the carpet in my bedroom. I had to smell it for months."

* "Platoon. It was the only movie he took me to in the three years we dated."

* "Ryder trucks. They remind me of the time we moved cross-country together. Whenever I see one now, I want to run it off the road."

* "The 'Happy Birthday' song." (Considering that this is the world's most frequently sung song, this is a *real* drag.)

* "Roast beef and cheese sandwiches. That's what I had for lunch the day my divorce was final."

* "Avocado green. It was the color of his clunky '67 Dodge."

* "Spaghetti and meatballs."

* "Leather chairs. He had a leather chair that he was very anal about; he came unglued if I even set my purse on it. Now when I see a leather chair, I plop right down."

* "The smell of Dallas."

* "*Hustler* magazine and the Three Stooges."

* "Putty things -- you know, those tools."

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