

RELATIONSHIPS

THE EX FACTOR

TECHNOLOGY HAS MADE IT INCREASINGLY EASY TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH OUR EXES, BUT SHOULD WE? BY LAILA ELISE

Since social distancing and isolating at home have become new norms for the better part of 2020, many of us have become routinely glued to the screens of our electronic devices. That's not necessarily a bad thing, as these devices have become lifelines for staying in touch with the people we love, but maybe you've experienced a message or two (or dozens, depending on your pre-COVID dating résumé) from "blasts from the past," casually reaching out to check in mid-crisis.

Sure, it's comforting on some level to know that our exes are thinking about us, or may even still care about us. Technology makes it so easy; a quick text or DM is all it takes to possibly send anyone into a spiraling frenzy of emotional "What ifs." But, as casual as it may seem, is keeping in touch with an ex always a good idea? Rachel A. Sussman, NYC psychotherapist and author of *The Breakup Bible*, says to

proceed with caution when maintaining a friendship after a breakup, but there are situations where the transition can work. Here are some things to consider:

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR CURRENT RELATIONSHIP STATUS

If currently in an exclusive relationship, a good litmus test for any conversation with an ex is to ask yourself, "What would my partner think if he or she read/heard this interaction?" If there's a legitimate reason for contact, such as mutual children, or if the dialogue is merely friendly, like providing life updates, then any reasonable partner is sure to empathize and understand (though some may overreact at first to something as innocuous as a hello, but they will come around if you remain honest and upfront). But if your messages are flirtatious in any way, or if the thought of your partner reading or overhearing your conversation makes you uncomfortable,

then perhaps a reevaluation is warranted.

CONSIDER YOUR OWN MOTIVES (AS WELL AS YOUR EX'S)

Relationships exist on a spectrum and aren't always black and white, so it's important that you understand the reason for maintaining a friendship after you've parted ways. Is it because you both decided you are better as friends? That's great, but be careful. If either you or your ex find yourself holding back feelings or not sharing your feelings about new partners, you may be entering that nebulous space where you are not quite able to move on.

FINALLY, TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

How does it make you feel when you hear from your ex? Are you happy and can't wait to reply, or do you feel anxious? Listen to yourself, and you'll have a clear indication of the right path forward. **1**