

Ex-proof your (online) life

5 ways to delete him, not your accounts

There's a point after every break-up when your brain decides to pull an inside job. 'I wonder how [name of life-crushing ex] is?', it casually ponders. Thirty seconds later and you've devoured said ex's Facebook, read the Twitter feed of an unidentified girl on his profile, and accidentally 'liked' a picture on his Instagram. As if you weren't feeling rubbish already, you're now left asking: brain, seriously, whose side are you on?

There are several reasons why we look, says Dr Pamela Rutledge, director of the Media Psychology Research Center. "A mix of curiosity and searching for clues to exactly why you broke up," she explains. It's also about wanting that social connection. "Being attached to someone sets off reward triggers in your brain; stop seeing that person and your brain goes into withdrawal, like with an addiction," says Dr Rutledge. So

when we look at an ex's profile, our reward sensors get all revved up – but don't find any comfort – so we leave feeling even worse. Thankfully, the following strategies will keep you social-media sane.

1 Wait 24 hours to change your relationship status

The bright side of putting 'XX is single' is not having to deliver the mortifying, 'Just so you know...' chat every time you see a friend or relative. The downside is that *everyone* will know, and is likely to have an opinion. "Even messages of sympathy can feel brutal," says psychologist and relationship expert Diana Parkinson. "Waiting at least 24 hours before changing or removing your status gives you time to make a rational call: so it's not a 'Ha, that'll show him' gesture, it's a choice you're ready to handle."

2 Delete pictures of you both

Those insanely cute snaps from your last holiday, last New Year, last Saturday night... yup, they've all gotta go. "If not, every time you log into your account it will be like opening a wound," admits Parkinson. "You'll still have them saved somewhere else."

3 Don't get even over updates

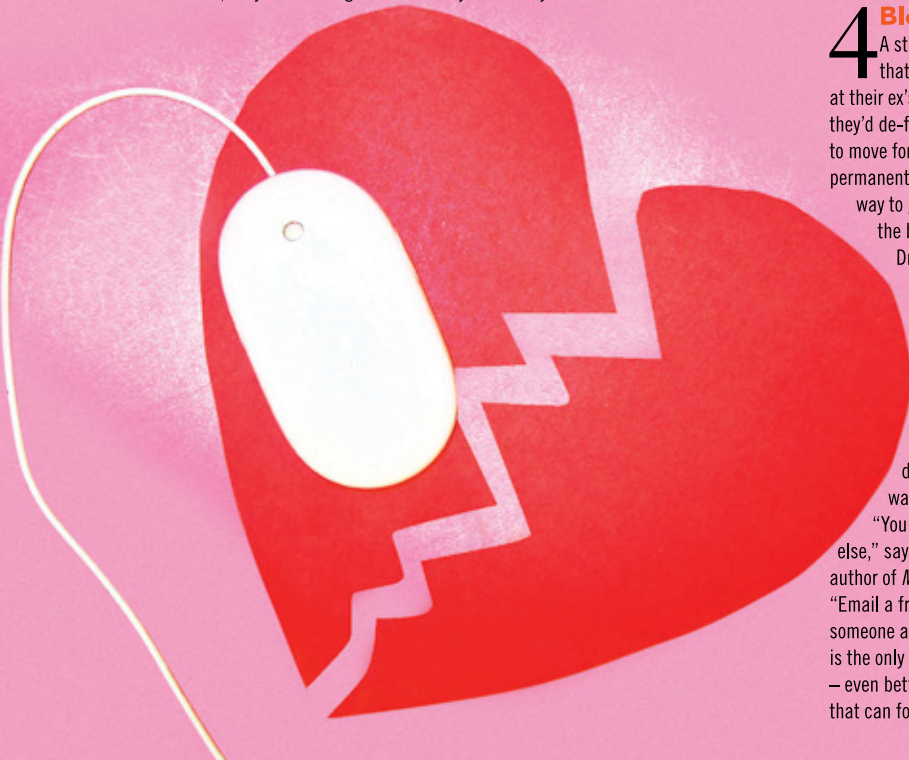
No slating him (bound to get back to him), or going OTT the other way and saying your life is just *amazing* right now. "Posting a lie will eat away at you," says Parkinson. "Your first status update post-split is about salvaging pride. Draft it, and look at it the next day before you post it. You'll feel in control that way – and control is your best weapon to move on."

4 Block, don't de-friend

A study by Brunel University found that people who took sneak peeks at their ex's Facebook page – even after they'd de-friended him – found it harder to move forward. So blocking – which permanently hides his profile – is the only way to go. "For a clean break, the sooner the better," advises study leader Dr Tara Marshall.

5 Stop searching for his name

You blocked him. High five. So, um, what's *that* you're typing into Google? It's not enough to say, 'I won't do it' – suppression makes you want to do it more. To stop: "You have to physically do something else," says psychologist Jeremy Dean, author of *Making Habits, Breaking Habits*. "Email a friend, go for a run, speak to someone at work. A replacement activity is the only thing that will distract you – even better if, like exercise, it's something that can form into a new habit."



WE WEREN'T STALKING, WE WERE JUST... OK, we were. Here are your confessions: **70%** have logged into a mutual friend's Facebook to spy on an ex. **74%** have viewed the profile of an ex's suspected new partner. **33%** have posted a status about their ex.