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It's Totally OK To Still Be Thinking About Your Ex — Here's Why

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Breakups can be *hard*, but they become even harder when you try to abide by the societal guidelines for how to move on after a serious relationship the "right" way. For example, there are countless theories and formulas speculating about how long it takes to get over an ex. To *Sex and the City's* Charlotte York, a broken heart heals in half the amount of time you were with someone. According to data pulled from a [2017 survey](#), the average person takes 18 months to get over their ex—but there are [plenty of other studies](#) that suggest it could take way shorter or way, way longer.

The reality, Charly Lester, dating industry expert and co-founder and CMO of [Lumen](#) tells mbg, is that there is no one set time frame to mark when you should be over an ex. How and when you heal ultimately depends on you—how you felt about the relationship, about the relationship ending, and how you process(ed) the loss.

“It’s only natural that as you continue to grow and develop, that person will have a hand in how you frame future experiences and perspectives.”

"I think society gives us maybe a few weeks where it's OK to talk about your ex, and then after you're expected to move on and not talk about him or her, but the reality is that they can take a lot longer to get over," Lester says. "The taboo about talking about an ex a long time after a breakup can be frustrating because often the best way to process something is talking about it."

It's normal to still be thinking about your ex post-breakup.

Even if you're past the point of bringing your ex up in conversation every chance you get, it's normal to still be thinking about your ex, no matter how long ago you parted ways. This is especially true, Lester says, if the relationship was a serious one.

"The more serious a relationship [is], the more integral a part of your life that person becomes," and "that doesn't switch off overnight," Lester explains. Therefore, when that season of life ends, it's natural to experience a kind of healing process in which you still think about the other person.

Just because you're thinking about an ex, that doesn't necessarily mean you're thinking about them in a longing, romantic context. Lori Salkin, a professional matchmaker and dating coach tells mbg that thinking about an ex-partner is similar to thinking about a best friend you've drifted away from: Because this person was most likely a kind of best friend to you and someone you shared a romantic connection with for a long time, they represent something that was once special, something that is of sentimental value to you.

Whether you're mourning a recent breakup or you've long since moved on and are in a happy, healthy relationship with someone else, Salkin says "It's only natural" that as you continue to grow and develop, that person will have a hand in how you frame future experiences and perspectives.

How you think about an ex will determine if your mind's wandering is healthy or not.

Clarissa Silva, a behavioral scientist, relationship coach, and the creator of Your Happiness Hypothesis Method, tells mbg that it's easy to over-idealize an ex after a breakup because when you join someone's life and then suddenly are no longer a part of it, adjusting to their absence can be difficult. Romanticizing their memory is one of the few detachment symptoms everyone experiences post-split, she says. So while it's not necessarily wrong to *think* about an ex, it *can* be unhealthy if the ways in which you're thinking about them is preventing you from moving on.

Love and Matchmaking's Destin Pfaff and Rachel Federoff tell mbg that *how* you think about an ex ultimately determines whether or not the thoughts are healthy or potentially destructive.

"When thoughts about an ex become obsessive to the point that it's affecting a person's life (current relationship, friends, family, etc.), that's when 'normal' goes to 'unhealthy,'" they explain. However, if your train of thought is constructive, asking yourself things like why you enjoyed that person and how you can apply those needs/wants to your life now, then thinking about an ex can be a positive, even helpful experience.

Don't knock yourself for reminiscing sometimes.

People can be really hard on themselves when they feel like they're taking "too long" to move on. But the truth is, it's OK to still be thinking about your ex, no matter if it's the day, week, month, or years after the initial breakup. It's *not* OK to stop yourself from thinking about an ex because society says that makes you "too emotional" or "broken."

Thinking and talking about an ex is essential in the healing process, and everyone heals in their own way, at different speeds. No one should be made to feel like they have to close a chapter in their lives in a certain amount of time, Pfaff and Federoff tell mbg. But if you feel like you aren't moving on as fast as you would like, there's no harm in asking for help, whether it be from a professional or just sitting down and venting to a good friend or loved one. Lester also suggests writing your feelings down in a journal entry.

"The more you process [your feelings and thoughts about an ex], the quicker you are likely to move on and feel better about it all," Lester says. The worst thing you can do is bottle them up.

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