

Relationship Advice: How to Approach Social Media Post-Breakup



By Dr. Jane Greer

It is nearly impossible to do anything privately these days because almost everything is caught on camera and then shared on social media. With that in mind, breaking up and moving on can carry an even heavier and more transparent burden since most steps are documented on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or another social media site. For example, John Cena was spotted holding hands with a mystery woman only days after his ex, Nikki Bella, confirmed she's in a relationship with Artem Chigvintsev. All of this played out on the internet. Sometimes the one left behind doesn't feel ready to move on, but when

they see their ex out there with a new love they might feel motivated to either try to put themselves out there too or, at the very least, look like they are. This raises the question, is using social media a good choice when trying to get over an old flame?

In this relationship advice, we explore how to approach social media after a break-up.

Seeing your former lover's posts with a new partner often stings, and might push you to actively seek social interaction with other people in an effort to offset the rejection and loneliness you are feeling, or to spark jealousy. Either way, it can be tempting to document your journey and share it for everyone to see, especially your ex. Whatever picture you present will offer a silent confirmation to him or her about how you are doing after the break. For those who are still mourning the loss of a relationship, putting a happy face out there on Instagram and Facebook can be a way to aspire to feel better than you do, a way to paint a picture in which you appear to be over it, no longer sad, and looking ahead to your future beyond your connection to your ex. Whether you are at a rooftop cocktail party, on an actual date, or lounging by a pool, the message you are sending is that you are carrying on and your life is moving along fine without the other person. The truth, though, might be that you would rather be home in your pajamas or are still pining for your lost love. If that is the case these photos can be a way of faking it until you make it. In the same way you might try to put a smile on your face even if you don't feel like it, there is the hope that doing this can help pull you out of your rut and get you back on a better road since it is forcing you to leave the house and be around other people.

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Additionally, some may truly be over the breakup, having survived the tornado of it, and are in fact happy now, meeting and dating new individuals. As a result, they may be eager to show off that they are happy and doing all right. But is it okay to present your life publicly in order to let your ex know he or she is in the past and you are now living in your present? Will this be a positive move for you? To what extent do you want to use social media? For some, it can certainly be helpful, but can it also be hurtful?

There are a number of factors to consider when you determine if using social media at this point is the right choice for you. If you have always had a strong online presence, you might not want that to change just because you are suffering through a heartbreak. After all, you have lost a partner, but you don't have to lose your usual connection to the world and feel you have been flung off the map entirely, too. In that case, keeping up with all of that might seem very natural and even help keep some normalcy in your life while you heal. But what if you feel pressure from having to "put on a happy face" and maintain your accounts, and that adds to your feeling more overwhelmed? In that instance, it might not be good for you right now. Along the same lines, putting a fictional story out there of what can look like a fairy tale life might also make achieving it feel even more elusive, and therefore might have the opposite effect of what you are hoping to accomplish, sending you further into despair rather than pulling you out of it.

Keep in mind, also, that when you post publicly you become exposed and open yourself up to all sorts of judgments and comments – anything from someone suggesting you are moving on too soon to making a statement about the way you look. Consider if you will be able to handle this, or if you are already so sensitive and vulnerable that you are at risk of

feeling even more bruised by their criticisms and opinions, many of which may be sparked by envy on the part of your followers. It's possible then that opening that door will make you feel worse rather than better. Also, try to determine why you are choosing to put yourself out there in this way, and understanding that might help you decide if you want to follow through with it. Are you doing it to get back at someone who wronged you? Are you hoping to one day reconcile with your ex, and this is a means of showing him or her that you are valuable and strong, and not pathetic without them? Or are you truly recovered and happy to be back out in the world?

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Finally, as you move through the murky journey of getting back on your feet, remember that in the same way, your own posts might make you and your life appear better than you may feel or that it actually seems to you, the same could be true for your ex. Much of what you see in their online photos may simply be their own social media front. Keeping this in mind can help offset feeling upset that they seem so happy without you.

The bottom line is that there is no correct answer, it is a matter of what is going to be right for you. Posting may be one of the ways to highlight that you are managing rather than sulking and feeling wounded. Furthermore, if you are no longer in personal contact, social media might be the only way to get the message out there. Ultimately, if it helps you feel better about yourself, gives you true support instead of demeaning statements, and the desire to get good photos mobilizes you off the couch and back out into the world, then this choice might serve you well.

Even if John had no intention of spreading any news, it is sometimes hard to keep it quiet. It seems like he is traveling down a new path without Nikki, whether we hear about it on

social media or not.

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