

Relationship Advice: How Do You Deal With A Badmouthing Ex?



By

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Breaking up is hard in itself. You have to find a way to move from the “we” back to the “me,” disentangle your lives and heal enough to look to the future. But what happens when the end of a relationship is charged with unrelenting and unresolved anger, and rather than bowing out gracefully and moving on your ex instead allows that anger to fuel bad behavior which can damage your reputation? This includes saying terrible things about you and can happen in different ways, including revealing personal information, distorting the

truth, gossiping about a private mistake that was made when you were together or even by spreading rumors. Sometimes the information begins with the ex, and sometimes the ex simply serves to fuel the negative information. For example, [celebrity exes](#) Matthew Morrison and Lea Michele were in this situation when Morrison recently addressed reports of Michele's diva actions while working on the show *Glee*. He said, "Yeah, going back to what I was saying, you know, you want to be a good, pleasant person to be around." He did not appear to have her back.

So, how do you deal with a vindictive ex who is out for revenge? How can you handle a negative campaign against you, especially from someone you used to care about? Check out Dr. Greer's relationship advice.

When your relationship dissolves and you find yourself with a spiteful ex, there is no telling how far their anger will go or whom it will reach. Now that they are no longer trying to please you or make things work between you, they might feel they have free license to say anything they want. That can be scary, and in many ways it is its own form of cyberbullying, since so much information can be spread online so quickly. It can do harm to your integrity as well as your self-esteem. But once you figure out the focus of the verbal assault there are ways to live with it and to deal with it. Depending on whom your ex is talking to and what they are saying, you can pick your course of action accordingly.

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If, for example, they are disparaging you to loved ones – family and friends – consider putting your own boundaries in place. If your sister-in-law or friend tells you that your ex is saying bad things about you, let them know first and foremost that you don't want to hear about it. Ask them to stop reporting back to you because it is too hurtful. Once you do that, you can take it one step further and ask if your loved one would consider telling your ex that they would prefer they didn't talk about you to them. They might explain that they are in touch with both of you, or that they truly care about you, and don't want to get in the middle or hear these negative claims. If the people your ex is badmouthing you to are your children, if they are old enough you can explain that just because people are saying things, doesn't make them true. In fact, you can tell them that you separated because you didn't agree about certain things, and because of the ongoing disagreement there is still a lot of residual anger between you. As a result, people can say and do terrible things when they are that upset. It is also okay to guide your children toward telling the other parent that they don't want to be told these things about mommy or daddy. In other words, you can encourage your children to put their own boundaries in place by either talking to the parent who is saying the disturbing things or by choosing to not listen or to ignore what is being said.

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Finally, as was the case with Lea Michele, sometimes an ex has an even wider reach and says bad things to the public. This can sometimes be the most disturbing since it can contaminate your reputation and it can be harder to know how to reach so many people with your own message. In this situation, there are two options. The first is to ignore whatever was said and not give it credibility by trying to explain it away or

justify it. If you do that, it can sometimes validate whatever information was being put out there. However, if your ex revealed personal material that was supposed to be kept private but is truly offensive and can be verified, the better choice may be to take ownership of it immediately. You can do that by acknowledging what happened and sharing your remorse and regret about it, as well as how you have grown from it. You can let people know it is something you will never do again, and that this can be a lesson learned which may serve as an example and be an inspiration to others.

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No matter who is the recipient of the information, having an ex – someone you once loved and trusted – attack your personality is an awful place to be. If you follow these basic suggestions, though, you will be able to keep some control so you can maintain your own relationships and hold onto their respect and your own integrity. In the case of Lea Michele, her ex didn't defend her when others questioned how she handled herself on the set of *Glee*, and, in fact, perpetuated the negative things that were being said about her. Hopefully she, and you, will be able to be your own champion and take back the narrative of your life.

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