

Why Are You Hanging On to Old Photos and Letters From Your Exes?



By Jane Greer, Ph.D for Galttime.com

Even though star Bradley Cooper stood conspicuously solo in pictures taken at the Golden Globes, there are still plenty of images floating around of him with his now- ex girlfriend Zoe Saldana.

Celebrities have to deal with this all the time – published pictures of them with former loves. The images are out there, on magazine covers and blogs, impossible to erase completely, even after they have moved on. But what happens if you aren't in the public eye?

Say, for example, that you've been dating for a few months now. Everything is great and your new relationship is growing at a comfortable rate. But last night he found that big box behind the couch, the one with all the pictures and letters from your old boyfriend. It was the first time you saw him get really angry, jealous even. He accused you of holding onto the stuff because you are still attached to your ex. So what do you do? Do you have to get rid of it all? What if you don't want to?

The most important thing that can come into play here is communication. Explain that you are not holding onto these things because you still have feelings for your former partner, but rather because you are holding onto the part of yourself you discovered then. In truth, it has less to do with the person you left behind and more to do with the shared history that was a marker on your past. Instead of thinking of it as a barrier between you and your new partner, think of it as a breadcrumb trail to who you were, and that way you can share how you've grown.

If, on the other hand, the mementos have no real meaning, then it is fine to just throw them out. But before you do that, accept that they can often be less about the person you were involved with, and more about who you were when you were with that person. Knowing that gives clarity to the meaning of those pictures and letters.