

## Should You Really “Stay Friends” After The Relationship is Over?

*“We broke up last night, but it was mutual and we’re going to remain friends.” Really? Why do we try to stay friends with an ex? And is it ever a good idea?*

Jerry Seinfeld wisely observed that breaking up with someone was like trying to tip over a soda machine. You can’t do it in one push. You have to get it rocking. Once it is moving and unstable only then you can push it over.

Breaking up *is* hard to do. It is difficult to tell another person, “I don’t want a romantic relationship with you.” Hearing it from someone else is clearly worse. There’s pain, tears, possibly even anger. It’s a dirty business. So often times, either as a way to soften the blow or out of sincere feelings of warmth, we say, “But let’s stay friends.”

From an intellectual level remaining friends may seem like a good idea. The logic usually goes, “I do like her as a person. We have fun together. We have good talks. I’m just not that into her romantically. I like having her in my life, so we should stop being romantic and just keep the friend part.” If both individuals are emotionally mature, and completely lacking in romantic feelings for each other, then a jump straight to the friend zone might be possible. However, this very rarely happens. Mutual breakups are usually not mutual, and the breakee is holding on to some strong romantic desires.

The ever present danger for these types of friendships is a backslide. One night you’re out as friends, you have a couple of drinks, somebody leans in too close, and BAM! It’s just like you never broke up. Only this situation is much more confusing, hurtful, and sad.

### Three Good Reasons Why You Shouldn’t Stay Friends:

#### 1. It is hard to turn off romantic feelings.

You see it in the paper every day. Someone throws away a prominent career because they have fallen in love (or lust) with someone they shouldn’t. This person knows that it is a bad idea, but controlling our emotions in this way takes a discipline that most folks can’t muster.

If you’ve ever been dumped, and agreed to “just be friends” you know deep down inside you still want to get back together. Even if you don’t want to...you want to. Each time you get together as friends you’re hoping and praying that you’ll end up in each other’s arms. You may even subtly be pushing things in that direction.

If you did the dumping, the knowledge that this person—this new friend—would love to kiss you will always be in the back of your mind waiting for the right moment to lead you exactly where you don’t want to go.

## **2. It's easy to get mixed messages.**

Friends do things for each other. They call when you're sick. They take you out when you've had a bad day. They give you a gift on your birthday. It is very easy to get mixed signals in the midst of all this kindness, love, and support. It's easy to wonder if feelings have changed. If there is some spark underneath all that effort. "Would she really come over and cook me dinner if she didn't love me and want to be with me?" you might ask.

Keeping it all straight can be a full-time job, and a single misinterpretation could lead to the backslide.

## **3. Hope springs eternal and you need to move on.**

One of the worst things that can happen to your dating life is getting hung up on someone who doesn't love you. You pine, and they move on. Each new person that comes your way and expresses interest is swiftly blown off, because you are desperately hoping you can rekindle the flame with your ex.

In a situation where both people part ways and don't see each other again this can be a problem. Your memories may haunt you, and make it difficult to find someone new. But imagine the likelihood of this happening if you're still seeing the person regularly. You can't meet someone new because your old love is still in your life—hanging around being your pal and reminding you how great they are.