

Why You Keep Having Dreams About Your Ex (Even Though You're Over Them)

[Gigi Engle](#) 4 hours ago



I had this [awful ex boyfriend](#) who was literally the devil incarnate. That might be a slight exaggeration. He wasn't exactly the king of hell, but he was most certainly the worst. OK, OK. I'll tell you about, but only the TL;DR version. After we broke up in a fiery explosion of destruction and chaos, I found out he'd been cheating me with prostitutes for the duration of our relationships (and this is the tip of the iceberg. There was much more).

Yeah, he sucked. But, for some weird reason, [I still have dreams about my ex](#); not every single night or anything, but he pops up in my sleepscape every once in awhile. It's been five years since I broke up with that jerk, so why is he still appearing in my dreams? It turns out, this is actually extremely common.

Even when you're totally over an ex, they can still make [cameo performances in your dreams](#) a la Freddie Kruger. It's not your fault, you're not crazy, and it does *not* mean you should hop out of bed, throw on your bathrobe and text your ex.

Here is why you're dreaming about your ex-bae, even though you're over it. Lord knows we need some answers so we can all stop waking up in the night, in a cold sweat, wondering if we've managed to ruin our own lives.

You're Just Using Your Ex To Grow

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It's totally normal to dream about your ex. You're just using these images and memories as a way to fill in some of the gaps you might be missing as a person. You know, figuring stuff out.

"On a psychological level we are still very much involved with working out the projections we placed on this person."

However bad the experience was with your ex, your brain is using it to develop. "When we fall in love with anyone, we project onto them qualities and traits we admire or detest, and essentially use them to hold pieces of our own psyche and to learn more about the missing or incomplete parts of ourselves," [Dr. Jennifer Freed](#), a family behavioral specialist, tells Bustle.

You may have kicked that sucker to the curb (for good reason), but that doesn't necessarily mean that your psyche was finished with them quite yet. I'm not saying you want to date this person, you just want to keep learning from your mistakes. "When relationships end, it does not mean that our connection to the person ends," Freed says. "On a psychological level, we are still very much involved with working out the projections we placed on this

person." Deep, right?

Dreams Are Complicated AF



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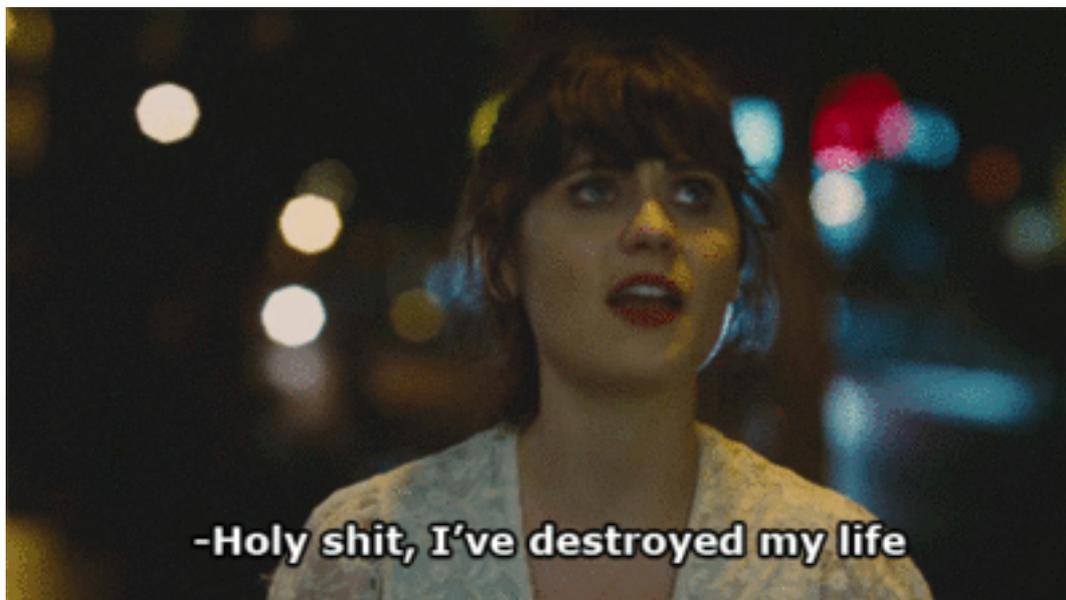
There is no cut and dry way to explain dreams or the people who manifest within them. Our brains use dreaming as a way to recover from stress, past traumas, or to make sense of sh*t we may not fully grasp. Different people play different roles. For example, your mom may not be your mom in your dream, just because she's there. She might be a guide of sorts.

Likewise, your ex appearing in a dream doesn't mean you're still into him or her. "We all have a cast of characters who play in our dream theatre. And all of us have (at least) one ex with a recurring role," Kelly Sullivan Walden, a dream expert and author of [Love, Sex, Relationship Dream Dictionary](#) tells Bustle. "This is partially due to (mental) habit, partially due to what your ex represents to you, and partially due to an attempt to heal unresolved issues (perhaps the reason for breakup)."

It may be awkward to have your ex masquerading around in your dreams, but they are really there to help you. Remember, the ex in your dreams is not your ex; it's YOU. "[During] dreamtime, the rules of engagement are

completely different," Sullivan Walden says. "As you dream, all the complexity of your emotion bursts forth from beneath the bed. Perhaps it would be inappropriate to explore lingering feelings about your ex in the light of day (cyberstalking him or her on Facebook), but it is perfectly appropriate to do so by night (and this way no one gets hurt). All that is going on your noggin while you sleep."

Your Current Relationship Isn't In Trouble Just Because You're Dreaming About An Ex



[GIPHY](#)

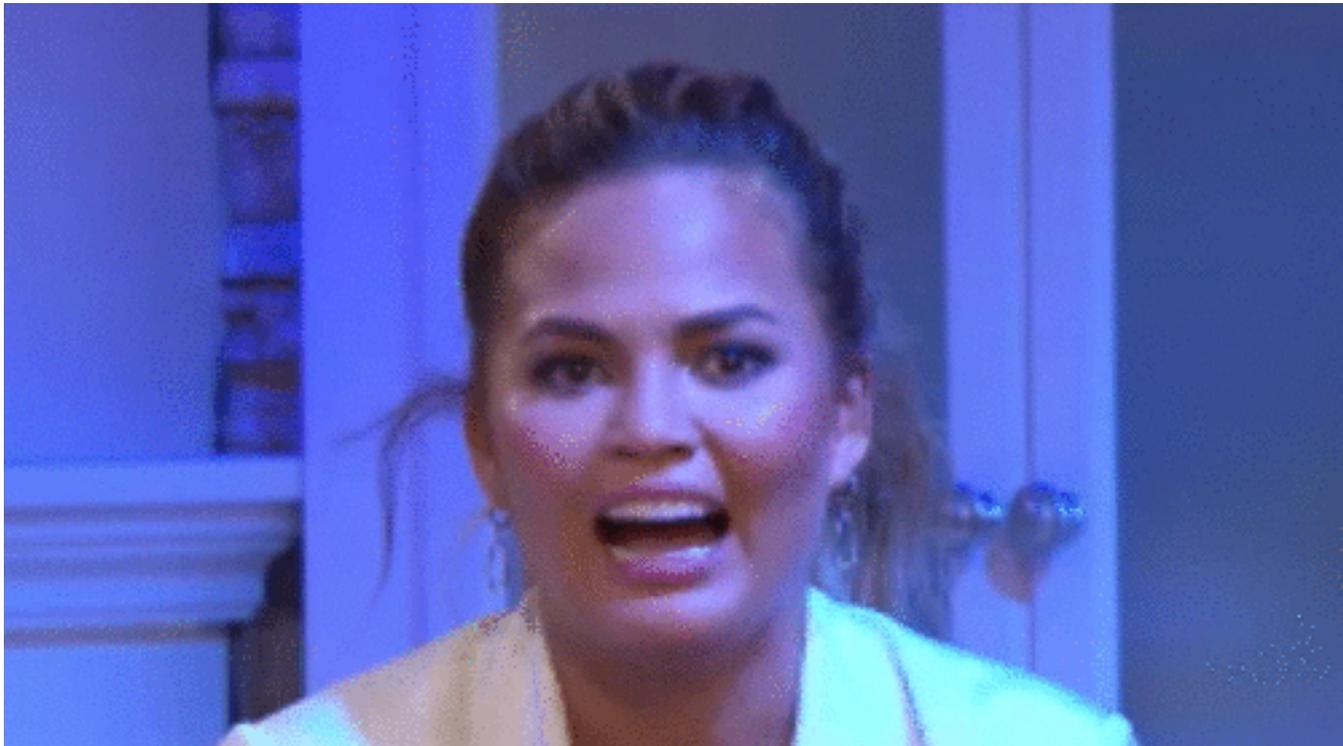
Constantly dreaming about an ex can often has us thinking that we're unsatisfied with our current relationship. Why are you dreaming about screwing your ex-boo, Erin, when you should be dreaming about your boyfriend or girlfriend?

"More often than not, our dreams are helping us heal an old relationship pattern."

There is an answer for this too. Your psyche might actually be using these ex dreams to make sure you don't eff up your new relationship. I know many of us believe if we are dreaming about an ex this must be a sign of a lack of fulfillment in our current partnerships. "Your current relationship may be

triggering issues that are still unresolved and are dredging up a time in the past when your younger self first stepped on this landmine,” says Sullivan Walden. “I believe that more often than not, our dreams are helping us heal an old relationship pattern.”

Don't Freak Out!



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If you're legit freaking out because your ex keeps turning up in your lovely dream about climbing waterfalls in Maui, only to completely f*ck up your mood, and leave you thinking about it for the whole next day; don't trip.

"Dreaming of your ex is actually a sign that you are making your best effort to own the parts of you you gave over to them."

Dreaming about your ex could be a good thing. “Dreaming of your ex is actually a sign that you are making your best effort to own the parts of you you gave over to them, whether good or bad, and that you have an opportunity to to become more whole,” Freed says.

Don't go bonkers over dreams about your ex. Sure, they might leave you

feeling weird and kind of put off or confused for a few hours or days, but see them for what they are: a coping mechanism set forth by your brain to help you heal, make sense of things, and move on with your life as a healthier, stronger person.