

# Going to bed with your ex might not be as bad you think

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Conventional wisdom holds that people set themselves up for even greater heartache when they jump into bed with their ex-partner after a breakup. However, according to the findings of a study in Springer's

journal *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, having sex with an ex doesn't seem to hinder moving on after the breakup. This is true even for those who continue to pine after their ex, says lead author Stephanie Spielmann of Wayne State University in the US.

For Spielmann, studying the potential costs of sleeping with an ex is of broad interest because sexual experiences with ex-partners are quite common across all age groups and relationship types. Together with her colleagues Spielmann devised two studies. In one, the researchers analysed the daily experiences of 113 participants who had recently experienced a [breakup](#). Two months later these participants completed a further online survey. The survey questions asked whether participants had tried to have any [physical contact](#) with their former partners, how emotionally attached they still were, and how they felt after each day. In a second study, 372 participants reported their actual and attempted sexual engagement with their ex-partner, as well as whether they were still emotionally tied to them.

The researchers found that pursuing sex with an ex did not seem to stand in the way of people's subsequent recovery from a breakup on a daily basis or over the course of two months. Most participants who pursued sex did end up in bed with their ex, but this did not influence how someone managed to get over the end of their relationship. Those pining after their ex-partner more often sought out sexual activity, potentially as a way of fostering closeness and connection. However, doing this did not leave them distressed or feeling depressed. In fact, it left them feeling more positive in everyday life.

"This research suggests that societal handwringing regarding trying to have sex with an ex may not be warranted," says Spielmann, who believes that the findings challenge common beliefs. "The fact that sex with an ex is found to be most eagerly pursued by those having difficulty moving on, suggests that we should perhaps instead more critically

evaluate people's motivations behind pursuing sex with an ex."

Spielmann says that although only exploratory, the findings highlight how important it is to study the nature of breakups over a longer period of time. It also underlines the multifaceted nature of how people recover from breakups. She believes it is an important subject to research because of the consequences it could have on someone's mental health, how distressed they remain, and whether they are able to move on.

**More information:** Stephanie S. Spielmann et al, Pursuing Sex with an Ex: Does It Hinder Breakup Recovery?, *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s10508-018-1268-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-1268-6)

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