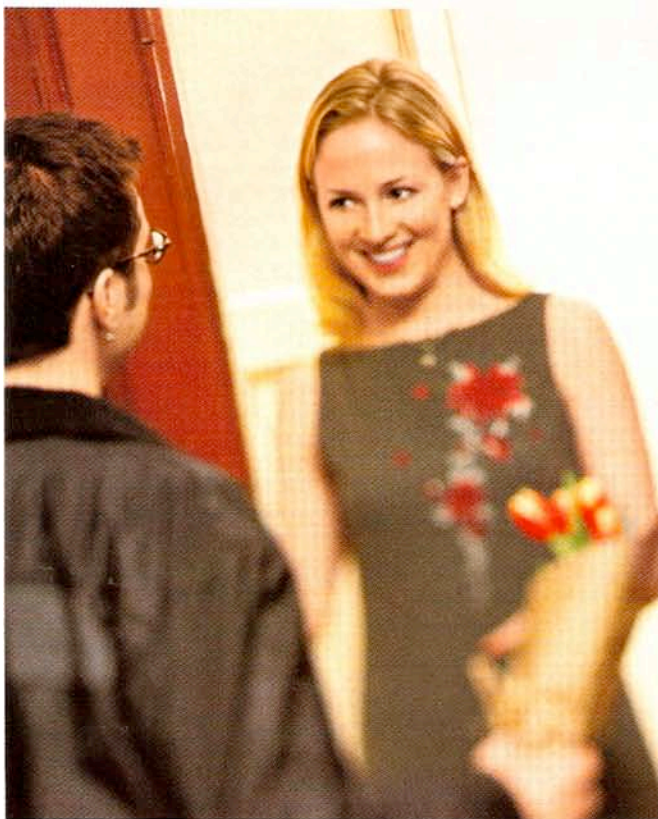


ex-men

He's Back! Now What?



He broke your heart once, and now he's back to do it again. Will you cave in to his charms? Were you wrong to say goodbye? *Complete Woman* dishes on why toxic rebounds happen—and whether or not you should reconsider starting it all up again.

By Josie Brown

AFTER HER LAST BOYFRIEND, ANDREW*, UNCEREMONIOUSLY DUMPED Tanya* in front of all their friends, she was justifiably hurt. To make matters worse, he didn't even wait long before dating again. His new sweetheart: her (former) best friend. *Ouch!* "It wasn't that he was such a wonderful boyfriend to begin with," Tanya moans, as she stirs a steady stream of honey into her cafe latte. "I put up with a lot of crap, but I always rationalized it by thinking, 'Well, he's cute, he's okay in bed and at least I'm not alone. Besides, when someone better comes along, we'll go our separate

*Note: Names have been changed.

ways...' I just never expected to be the 'dumpee.'"

Then, two months ago—one year, four months and 12 days after the big breakup—Andrew knocked on Tanya's door again, bearing flowers and that oh-so-familiar lopsided grin. His apology—"Hey, babe, I was a fool to fall for her come-on. I must have been out of my mind to let you go..."—was contrite enough to give Tanya second thoughts.

the boomerang boyfriend

After that, it was so easy to fall for his sob story: "The bitch tossed me out on my

butt! Look, I just want us to start over again, as if nothing ever happened," he pleaded. "We'll move as slow as you need to see I'm on the up-and-up. If you want, I'll sleep on the couch...Is that what you *really* want?"

"It was a good question," laughs Tanya. "But at the time, I wasn't thinking about the couch. I was thinking about the rest of my life. Then again..." She pauses, then shakes her head in shame. "At least there would be another warm body in the bed, right?"

True, but not for long. Andrew's pre-break-up pattern re-emerged. He went from worshipping Tanya with sweet nothings to dissing her with caustic jibes. And his wandering eye came back into focus. Soon he was going out night after night—ostensibly "with the boys"—but Tanya knew better: Her "second honeymoon" with Andrew was definitely over. "He was just using me as a place to shack up and to sleep with until someone better came along. This time, though, I kicked *him* out."

Was revenge sweet? Tanya shrugs. "It felt good for about 24 hours. Then it hit me: Falling for him once was bad luck. But letting him back into

my life after knowing what I did about him was sheer stupidity. Why was I so eager to think that anything had really changed between us?"

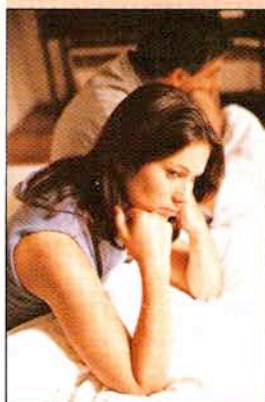
signs of the scam

Pamela Jayne, a domestic abuse counselor and author of the book, *Ditch That Jerk!* (Hunter House Publishers), thinks she has the answer. "We women have a propensity for believing in the good of others. We truly want to believe men when they say, 'It won't happen again, I've changed.' That is why when these kind of men apologize, we ask them to stay."

Are there tell-tale signals that an ex-man may be bluffing? Definitely, says domestic abuse counselor Pamela Jayne. "A very early warning sign is that he's just too good to be true. First he puts you on a pedestal, but once you've given him full reign, he starts knocking you down. He suggests that you change your clothes, or perhaps your hair. Soon, nothing about you is good enough for him."

Other sign posts to look for: He feels free to embarrass you in front of others. Or, he's a control freak. Also, you're constantly catching him in a lie.

Models in photographs used to illustrate story only.



he's an ex-man if...

- He's moody—and it's always your fault.
- You're never good enough for him.
- You give—and he takes.
- He's always comparing you to other women.
- He doesn't like your family or your friends.
- You have to get his permission to do anything that doesn't include him.
- You've caught him in too many lies.
- He never lets you know where you stand with him.
- He gets jealous of you, but still flirts with others.
- He's getting more out of the relationship than you are.

fibs and freeloading

Mona*, a paralegal with a pretty smile, has a shy demeanor, a love for sports—and a depleted bank account, thanks to her ex-boyfriend, Randy*.

"We met while I was on vacation. He was the strong, silent type, really into exercise," she says. After they parted, he called her at least three times a day. Mona had never before received that sort of attention from a man. "It was the kind of thing you only read about in fairy tale and romance books—at least, I thought so at first. I didn't realize until later that he was calling because he was desperate. Not desperate in love, just desperate for a place to live." Within a week, he had convinced her to let him move in.

Once ensconced in her studio apartment, he'd answer her phone, but forget to pass along messages from her friends. "He called my best friend a snob," she says. "And he always had an excuse as to why I should break plans I'd made with my girlfriends."

Randy never once offered to help out with the rent, phone or utility bills, and his extravagant restaurant and bar bills were soon eating away at her savings. Although Randy claimed to be a certified fitness trainer who could get a job at any gym, he ignored her subtle hints to consider looking for work. Mona later found out that he'd never been a trainer—let alone single: There was a warrant out for him for skipping out on his alimony and child support. Tearfully, she asked him to leave.

But within a month, Randy was begging to come back—and Mona, convinced she

was destined to be his guardian angel, gave him the key to her apartment again. "I was such a fool," Mona says. "Financial and legal records, those kinds of things are so easy to check out. I guess I just wanted to believe him, because I was afraid I'd never find anyone else."

That's a common mistake, says counselor Pamela Jayne. "Many women will do what they can to avoid the stigma of being single. There is a message out there that we need a man in our lives—no matter who that is."

And sometimes the men we find to be



with are the very men who can hurt us the most. "It is as if these men have a radar," explains Jayne. "They seek out women with low self esteem, then slowly tear down their defenses by focusing on all of their weaknesses."

Why is he doing this? "Because he wants to divert the woman's attention from his issues," Jayne explains. "If he can convince you that you are the one with the problem, you'll forget about him and his shortcomings. He thinks, 'If I take away your choices, you won't have any other choice but to stay with me.'"

putting up your guard

Once you've left him, how can you avoid again falling for his sweet-talking lies?

"First," says domestic abuse counselor Pamela Jayne, "you must stop and say to yourself: 'What does he get out of this? What are the benefits to you? Does he have positive feelings about women in general? Why is he doing this to me?' Take the time to sit with a pen and paper and assess the pros and cons of the situation. If all the pros end up on his side of the sheet, and the cons are on your side, then show him the door once and for all."

Is there any chance he might have changed in the meantime? Perhaps, says Jayne, but more than likely the answer is a resounding "No!" "Most people don't just wake up and change. They have to have motivation. Allowing him back in takes away any real motivation he has to change at all."

Both Tanya and Mona admit they overrode their gut instincts when they let their exes back through the door—and they lived to regret it all over again. Jayne's advice: "Don't think about what you may have done wrong the first time around. If it felt bad to you, it was, and accept that. Then, get out."

CW

it's quiz time!

Should you "X" your ex—or take him back?

- When you first met, he...
 - did everything he could to sweep you off your feet.
 - let you do the chasing.
 - was cute and attentive.
- While first dating, you noticed that he...
 - spent every waking moment with you—alone.
 - always invited his buddies along.
 - was always open to your ideas and your friends.
- You both fell into a routine of...
 - letting him make all the decisions.
 - you chasing him, he leading you on.
 - learning each others' strengths and weaknesses.
- Tiny cracks in the relationship first appeared when...
 - what he said wasn't what happened next.
 - you were doing more and getting less.
 - one of you started to hesitate about being exclusive.
- You caught him in a lie. He then...
 - told an even bigger whopper to cover up.
 - 'fessed up, but had a good excuse.
 - was so ashamed he never did it again.
- In fact, he lied to you...
 - more times than you'd like to admit.
 - every now and then, but only about insignificant things.
 - rarely if ever. That's just not his style.
- A big blow-up occurred...
 - when his abuse was more than you could take.
 - when you got tired of his B.S.
 - over something stupid.
- You broke up with him in the first place because...
 - your gut told you he was bad news.
 - deep down inside, you knew you could do better.
 - you were unsure of his feelings. And you regret it.
- When you said your final goodbye, he was...
 - threatening, begging and desperate.
 - cold, unresponsive and uncaring.
 - upset, stubborn and hurt.
- Now he's back. And your heart tells you...
 - that he hasn't really changed.
 - to take a risk, but don't get your hopes up too high.
 - you still love him, and you shouldn't have ended it.

the verdict

If your answers are mostly "a"s...**X marks the spot!**

This guy is bad news: a cling-on who only wants to cramp your style. If you let him hold on for dear life, he will wring you dry—emotionally and financially. He doesn't make the cut and the sooner you tell him that, the better.

If your answers are mostly "b"s...**Dump—or be dumped.**

He's not perfect. But he's mostly harmless, so why not stick it out until someone better comes along? Because, in his eyes, you're dumpable—and if you're with him, you might not find Mr. Right. Seriously, sweetie, it's time to move on.

If your answers are mostly "c"s...**Give the guy a reprieve.**

So, he's made a few mistakes. It's natural for relationships to move forward and backward. Don't write him off just yet. Instead, have a heart-to-heart talk about your expectations, and listen to his. Then take it one day at a time.