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How to break up with a guy

By Dan Bova

Let's face it, there are no easy ways to end a relationship. But if you understand what really makes men tick, there are ways to make it a little less horrible. Here are some insider tips from the mouths of the broken-hearted — and some love gurus — on how to let a guy down easy. Use them next time you need to send a tella packin'.

Be definitive

When telling a guy that it is over, be clear that it is absolutely, positively O-V-E-R. "Sometimes we may be inclined to leave the door open — either to leave options open for ourselves or to soften the blow of the breakup for the other person — but this is dangerous territory," says **April Masini**, author of *Date Out of Your League*. It might seem nice to offer the possibility that one day in the future, you two will find your way back into each other's arms, but all this does is give the poor sap false hope. And with false hope come drunken calls at 3 a.m. asking if you're ready to take him back yet. "Make it clear that he needs to move on," says John Seeley, M.A., author of *Get Unstuck! The Simple Guide to Restart Your Life*. "Guys would rather hear the truth and then know what they need to do to move forward in their lives."

Don't let him be the last to know

Sure, talking through your feelings with a friend can be helpful when working up the courage to break things off, but try to limit yourself to how many people hear the test-run of your dumping speech. Eventually, some one is going to blab, and as any guy will tell you, being the last to know that you've been dumped is not fun. "My best friend told me that he heard my girlfriend was thinking of breaking up with me," says Dave, 32, from Long Island, NY. "I later found out that all of my friends knew before I did. I was so pissed off and humiliated. I felt like the biggest fool on earth, walking around telling every one how in love I was, and all of them knowing she was about to can me. It was the worst."

Don't use a keyboard

The Internet is great for many things: Locating discount airfares, paying credit card bills, wasting hundreds of hours looking at weird sites, the list goes on and on. But one thing that is not on that list and never should be is dropping a boyfriend like a bad habit. "My ex dumped me twice online," says Chris, 31, from Washington, MO. "Once by email after we'd spent the weekend together; the second time over IM. At least 'woman up' and tell me in person!" seriously, canceling a relationship like a credit card will put you in his Worst Girlfriend Hall of Fame for life. "Answering machine, emails, Post-Its and Taxes are not cool ways to break up," says **April Masini**. "If you've spent more than three dates with the person — or if you've slept together — you owe him a face-to-face sit-down." If you're a total coward, the phone can be an acceptable termination device — but only for short-term relationships.

Steer clear of take-aways

OK, you don't have to tell someone point-blank that he is boring, weird, smelly or all of the above, but lying your way out of a relationship is almost always going

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to backfire. He'll feel twice as bad when he learns the truth, and you'll feel like an idiot. "I went out a few times with this chick, and we talked a few times afterward," says John, 34, from Virginia. "She worked as a government contractor at a submarine base and told me she'd been accepted to a top-secret program in Arizona that would last at least six months. Long story short, she was lying, and I bumped into her a month later. And this was after we had a conversation about how lame it was when people couldn't be honest!" If you want either one of you to maintain your dignity, tell him the truth. You don't have to be brutally honest, though. "I just don't feel a connection with you" is a perfectly good way of saying, "You are too ugly" or "I didn't know someone could kiss that badly."

Be brief

"Keep it short and sweet," says Stephany Alexander, relationship expert at womansavers.com. Unless you've been together for years and years, no breakup should last more than 30 minutes. You don't need to give him every reason you want to end things. Just name one or two major problems, and be done with it. The last thing you want is having him interpret your litany of ways he's a loser as things he can change to win you back. Make it clear that this isn't a negotiation. It may seem cruel to be brusque, but like ripping off a Band-Aid, the faster you do it, the faster you'll feel better.

Avoid the drama

A guy with wounded pride and hurt feelings can get verbally abusive. Try to diffuse the situation with silence. "Don't engage with him," says April Masini. "Listen. Be quiet. Don't respond." Don't fuel the fire by defending yourself. Let him get it all out, then leave. If you're worried that the guy might hurt himself or someone else in the wake of your breakup, call a counselor or a police officer. Trying to take on a dangerous situation by yourself is just that—dangerous.

Secure a break-up buddy

"Breaking up can be overwhelming," says April Masini, "and it may cause you to want to call your ex for contact or comfort. After you break up, have plans to meet with a friend. Debrief over lunch and a movie." Remove his number from your cell phone while you're at it. Post-break-up conversations tend to lead to post-break-up sex, and next thing you know, you're having brunch together and wondering how the heck you wound up with this guy *again*. If you want to touch base to see how he's doing, give it a couple of months at least. If he's still sweet on you, any contact (no matter how innocent) is going to be interpreted as a ray of hope that love will spring again.

Jan Bova is executive editor of Stuff magazine. For the woman's perspective on breakups, read [How to break up with a woman](#).

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