

# To Friend or Not to Friend

BY KENYA MCCULLUM

**E**very woman has that one man in her past. You know the one. It started and ended long ago, but from time to time, you still think about him.

It used to be that thinking about our exes was all we could do to reconnect. Now, thanks to social media sites such as Facebook, finding an ex can be as easy as the click of a mouse.

But just because you can easily “friend” an ex-lover, does that mean you should? Licensed clinical counselor Kelly Chicas of Albuquerque Family Counseling advises that you tread carefully.

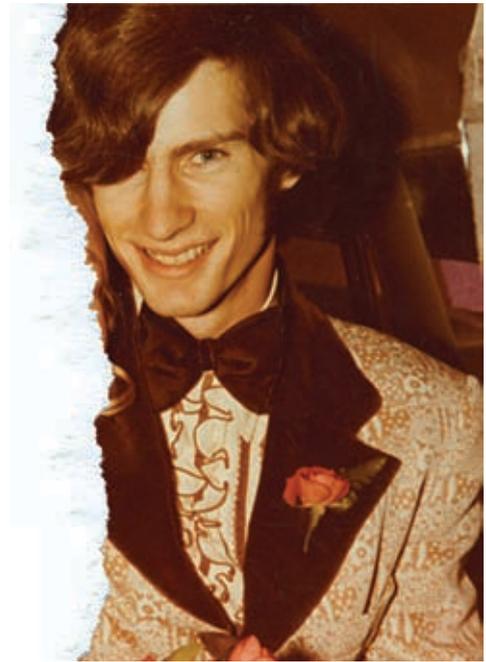
“What starts out as an innocent ‘I wonder what happened to...’ can quickly become an ‘I never meant for this to happen,’” she says. “What happens on Facebook doesn’t stay on Facebook, and it can cause you anxiety and stress—especially if you’re currently in a relationship.”

In fact, a high percentage of married people who contact former flames end up unexpectedly having affairs with them. This is in part because the memories we have about relationships from our youth also include the raging hormones that we felt during that time.

In some cases, one wall post on Facebook can lead to situations far stickier than an affair. Anneliese Curtis Place, 42, regrets getting in touch with her ex online because, although it started as a friendly chance to reminisce about old times, things turned sour when she became engaged to another man.

“I was not looking for love, so I assumed he wasn’t either,” Place says. “I thought I was saying ‘yes’ to friendship, and he thought I was saying ‘yes’ to a whole lot more.”

Place’s ex-lover was so convinced that he was the only man for her that he hopped on a plane and landed on her doorstep unannounced in order to convince her, too. Needless to say, this dramatic—and creepy—declaration of love from a man that she had not been



with for 25 years caused problems in her relationship and soured whatever warm feelings of friendship Place had for her ex.

So, it begs the question: Should you or shouldn’t you befriend your long-lost love online? Consider several factors before sending that friend request.

- **The state of your current union.** Are you currently in a relationship and having problems? This is probably the worst time to contact your ex and could exacerbate the troubles in your current relationship.
- **Ulterior motives.** Why do you want to contact your ex? Do you want him back—or do you want to get back at him? It’s important to make this distinction so you can gauge your emotional involvement appropriately.
- **Abusive exes.** Sometimes we want to see our exes in the best possible light, but if the relationship involved any kind of emotional or physical abuse, take off your rose-colored glasses, step away from the keyboard and remember what he put you through.
- **Touchy subjects.** In some cases, the Internet isn’t the best venue to communicate with an ex. If you really need to get something off your chest, get effective closure by writing a letter. 

## No red flags?

On the other side of the coin, befriending your ex on the Internet may be a good way to resolve innocuous unfinished business or just catch up. Make sure you both have the same expectations. And remember to keep the past where it belongs, and don’t expect that your ex will become a part of your future.