Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for a while, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same”  ~

### **Despite advice from well-meaning friends, family and my therapist, my ex is still in my life.**

To say he hurt me is an understatement.

His request for space was a surprise, terribly timed and tactless.

The untangling of our relationship was difficult and set off a series of hard-to-learn lessons.

It was through our break-up that I was forced to examine my part of the falling out. It was through this break that I was able to look in the mirror at my own self and see what I had neglected to see before.

My ex was my reflection.

Every dysfunction that made him push me away is in me. We both fear intimacy and loss of independence. We both struggle to love without conditions. We both have a healthy dose of self-loathing.

I was able to love and forgive him for all of these faults. Yet, I have struggled to disown and deny these faults in myself for years.

In my past relationships I blamed the demise on someone else. However, the cold hard reality is that I was just accepting the love I was capable of receiving and perhaps even giving. I was restricted within these relationships because of my own insecurities and brokenness.

It’s possible I was the real one to blame.

But, this break-up felt different to me. It represented failure. In his rejection, I deemed myself a failure as a woman.

I wasn’t the type of woman you build a life with. I wasn’t smart enough to keep him on his toes or sexy enough to hold his interest. I wasn’t enough to make his heart beat faster than his logical mind could process. I felt if he truly loved me that love would outweigh all of his commitment issues: instead, he would embrace our love affair.

It took a lot of introspection and some tough love to finally accept that relationships aren’t fairy-tales and that I was counting on the wrong person to prove my own worth.

Through my angry eyes I also saw my ex as a failure. I saw a man who was unable to deal with raw emotions. I saw a man who didn’t want the responsibility of a complex woman. He failed to confront his fears and chose to only see the potential problems of us.

Despite our difficulties, we weren’t ready to let the other go.

Our road to friendship hasn’t been easy. It’s through perseverance and a lot of compassion that we continue to accept each other in new ways. Without the distraction of sex and flirtation we are seeing the true essence of each other.

This transition has provided me the opportunity to look at my reflection and continues to help me realize that I did not fail as a woman or as a partner. When the stars align, timing is right and the connection is there I will be a wonderful lover and partner.

I am good enough. And so is my ex.

His issues with relationships do not take away all of the wonderful things about him, just as my overly clingy, insecure approach to relationships doesn’t take away from the wonderful things that make me who I am.

When we strip away our relationship issues, we are left with two people who possess all the facets to make a beautiful friendship.

If you are considering slamming the door on your ex-lover, consider these benefits of keeping it open first:

### **1. Your ex could be long-term friend material.**

The world is tough and full of people who won’t get you. Keep people in your tribe who have shared interests, intellects and common goals or if they don’t, who you can respect for theirs and who can challenge you meaningfully on yours. You may discover you have more in common now that you aren’t distracted by all of the relationship stuff. Don’t give up on someone just because it’s not the time and place for romance or because the cosmos didn’t line up for you in the romance department.

### **2. Your ex understands you better than most.**

Your ex has learned to adapt to the little things about you that makes you special. They have learned to adjust and how to work with you when life gets a little weird. You don’t always have to be tough and put up your best front. He has seen you cry and lose your mind. He knows how to handle you at your most vulnerable.

### **3. Your ex still knows your greatest strengths.**

Your ex was with you because he saw something of the amazing woman you are.  Just because the two of you didn’t fit together like PB & J doesn’t mean he doesn’t think you are the greatest thing since sliced bread.  When you doubt yourself he’ll be able to remind you how awesome you are. He’s still sticking around because he sees your greatness.

### **4. Your ex will challenge you.**

It’s difficult to put egos and emotions aside and be good to each other after a break-up. Doing so says I respect you and think you are important enough to make the effort. There will be temptation, buttons will be pushed, and patience will be tried. You will be forced to be honest about your intentions and they won’t always be clear.  Hopefully, these challenges will contribute to greater self-awareness and the friendship will prove worth the effort.

### **5. Your ex is a reflection of you.**

It is through these reflections we are able to learn who we are, how to love and not judge, find our edges and  the numerous other lessons that the universe is serving us through this past lover. Through our reflection we learn how beautifully imperfect we are.

Of course, not every lover or ex is meant to stay in our life. Some teach us the art of letting go and that’s a story for another ex.

As for this one, he’s still worth holding onto.

When you are able to look past the heartache, give up on expectations and dig a little deeper, it’s possible that instead of grieving lost love, you may just graduate from infatuation to understanding, and find reason to celebrate a beautiful new connection.