

The Texts He Sends to Pull You Back

And exactly what they mean, from a guy who used to send them.

You are doing better. You went a few days without checking his profile. You laughed at something and it did not cost you anything. And right on cue, your phone lights up with his name.

That timing is not a coincidence, and it is not him missing you. I know, because for 25 years I was the guy sending those texts. A full-blown asshole who ran a lot of these plays and finally did the work to stop. I will not call myself a reformed narcissist, because those do not change. I used to operate like one, and now you get the manual.

Here are the six texts he sends to pull you back, what each one actually means, and what to do. Read them once and you will never un-see them.

1. The "I've been thinking about you."

Out of nowhere, soft, no real ask. It feels warm. That is the point. He is not reaching out because you crossed his mind. He is testing whether the door is still open. A reply, any reply, tells him it is.

WHAT IT MEANS: he is checking if he still has access.

WHAT TO DO: nothing. A non-answer is a full answer. Silence is not rude here, it is information he already gave you plenty of.

2. The apology that is not one.

"I'm sorry you felt that way." "I'm sorry things got out of hand." Notice there is no him in it. No specific thing he did, no change he is making. A real apology names the harm and owns it. This one hands the feeling back to you.

WHAT IT MEANS: he wants the credit for apologizing without the cost of having done anything wrong.

WHAT TO DO: measure every apology against one question. Did he name what he did, or did he name your reaction? If it is your reaction, it is a move, not an apology.

3. The crisis text.

"I'm not doing well." "Something happened, I need to talk to you." "I'm in the hospital." Suddenly he is the one who needs saving, and you were built to be the person who shows up. He knows that about you.

WHAT IT MEANS: your empathy is the lever, and he is pulling it.

WHAT TO DO: care about the human, and still not be the one he calls. He has other people. If it is a real emergency, they exist. Your job stopped being his safety net the day he stopped being safe.

4. The memory.

"Remember that trip." "Heard our song today." He is not sharing a moment. He is reaching for the highlight reel, the version of the two of you that existed for a handful of good days, and hoping you will edit out the rest.

WHAT IT MEANS: he is selling you the best three days and quietly deleting the other three hundred.

WHAT TO DO: let yourself remember the whole thing. The good days were real. So was the walking on eggshells. You are allowed to hold both and still close the tab.

5. The jealousy poke.

"Saw you looked happy." "Who's the new guy." He noticed you moving on, and it landed. This text is him trying to plant a flag back in your head, to be a voice in your day again even as a small annoyance.

WHAT IT MEANS: your recovery is visible, and it bothers him.

WHAT TO DO: read it as a scoreboard. If he is watching you be happy and it stings him enough to comment, you are winning. You do not owe the scoreboard an explanation.

6. The "I've changed."

The big one. "I've been doing a lot of work on myself." "Just let me show you I'm different." It arrives right when you are strong enough to leave for good, because that is exactly when he can feel you going.

WHAT IT MEANS: people who have genuinely changed show it slowly, to everyone, over months, with no audience. A man who has to text you the news is performing the change, not living it. I know the difference because I lived on the wrong side of it for a long time.

WHAT TO DO: believe actions you can see over weeks, never a sentence you can read in seconds. Real change does not need you in the room to be real.

The one thing under all six

Every one of these texts shows up for the same reason: he felt you getting free. When a man like him senses your absence, what he actually misses is the supply, the attention and the control and the mirror you used to hold up for him. Nothing trips that radar like signs you are recovering.

So here is the reframe that changes everything. When he reappears, stop reading it as "he still cares." Read it as a progress report. The text is not a door opening. It is proof you already walked out of one.

You were never the crazy one. You were never too much, or too sensitive, or the problem. You were a person being slowly convinced otherwise by someone who benefited from your doubt. Now you can read the plays as they happen, and a play you can see coming has no power left in it.

You already survived him. This is how you stop just surviving.

Want the whole playbook, the full breakdown of every move and exactly what to do at 2am when the spiral starts? That is the course, and it is where these notes go next. For now, this guide is yours. Keep it on your phone. The next time his name lights up your screen, you will know precisely what you are looking at.

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