

UNITED WISDOM

Digital boundaries after a breakup

Relationships and Shared Life

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

R-30-N05 · EN

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

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Epigraph

“Unexpected obstacle.”

Edith Wharton, The Reef, Book I, Chapter I, the opening of Anna’s telegram. A short fragment in the original English. A literary postponement does not explain a present-day breakup or establish the reason for silence. Primary context.

What this article is about

Alyona and Igor have separated. They still need to arrange the return of a few belongings, but Alyona notices that every practical conversation ends with a visit to his page. She sees a photograph, searches for meaning in its caption and returns to old messages. Igor did not write to her about the photograph. Nevertheless, the whole evening is once again arranged around what he might have meant. Alyona wants to limit this access without pretending the past was unimportant or turning the return of belongings into a reason to discuss their relationship again.

This is a fictional scene about the difference between a shared task, one’s own attention and another person’s permission for contact. We offer no recovery timetable, compulsory ban on communication or instructions for a particular app’s features. A digital boundary can vary by subject: viewing, messages, an archive and a public account need not be decided in one gesture. Primary research, a literary episode and our practical suggestion do not form a proven method. A real person’s legal obligations and safety have not been established here; where there are threats, an ordinary shared trial is not prescribed.

I. A shared question and access to a new life are different

Alyona needs to know when Igor can collect his belongings. That task requires particular information rather than the entire story of how he now lives. She may want to know more, and that desire need not be immediately eliminated. But it does not automatically become part of the task. When a question about timing opens an endless discussion of photographs, the two people are already talking about different subjects. One may believe he simply answered; the other may feel she has received an invitation to participate in her former partner’s private life again.

A boundary begins with distinguishing these subjects. What are they actually still discussing together? What does Alyona view on her own initiative? What did Igor offer personally, and

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

what did he publish for another audience? The answers may be incomplete. There is no need to list every future contact in advance or declare any connection a mistake. She can choose one current task without adding information it does not need in order to be completed. This does not guarantee calm, but it keeps the subject accurate: a necessary question need not become an entrance to everything else.

The opposite extreme is possible too. Alyona could call every message unnecessary and miss important information about the return of belongings. Language about boundaries does not determine which obligations remain or what was agreed. Where consequences matter, facts and applicable rules are needed; this article does not establish them. A limited, appropriate way to discuss a task can remain without promising a personal conversation. The end of closeness and the end of every practical question do not always coincide. Their difference neither requires restoring the relationship nor automatically authorises receiving information about someone's new life.

II. A publication is not necessarily a message to us

Igor posts a photograph of a walk. Alyona recognises a place they once visited together and assumes he wants to tell her something. Perhaps the publication relates to that memory; perhaps its meaning is different. The image does not establish this. What is known is that a photograph was published, not that Alyona was chosen as its recipient. General availability does not turn material into a private remark. The distinction can be uncomfortable: it leaves unanswered a question she wanted to settle, but does not require treating her assumption as an actual approach.

At the beginning of Edith Wharton's The Reef, a short telegram takes on powerful emotional meaning for Darrow; the narrative also shows how much he reads into Anna's smile. This is a literary scene of perception, not research into messaging. Our comparison asks what was conveyed and what the recipient added. It does not explain Igor or prove Alyona misunderstands every message. It helps keep one person's experience distinct from complete knowledge of another's intention.

If a subject really requires a response, it can be considered as a separate question instead of seeking an answer in every new publication. The article does not require sending that question: contact may be unwanted, inappropriate or unsafe. Uncertainty can remain uncertainty while someone makes decisions about viewing without confirmation of a hidden message. Sometimes the boundary is precisely to stop reading someone's page as a conversation neither person began. There is no need to prove the author entirely indifferent; it is enough to recognise the absence of a known personal approach on this subject.

III. Frequency of observation and the status of a connection are separate questions

Alyona may remain a follower and hardly view the page. She may remove it from habitual access but receive information through acquaintances. She may have no contact and still reread the archive repeatedly. One external status does not tell us what happens to attention. It therefore helps to ask about the action more directly: what does she do, when, and what answer is she looking for? Frequency need not be turned into a diagnosis. She can simply notice that this way of participating now takes up more space than she is willing to give it.

In Tara Marshall's 2012 study, an online survey of 464 participants associated monitoring a former partner's Facebook page with greater current distress and lower personal growth. Remaining Facebook friends showed a different, mixed pattern. The correlational design did not establish causal direction. These findings do not prove that removing a contact will help Alyona, nor automatically apply to all platforms, ages and circumstances. Observation and an external connection status should not become one universal rule merely because such a rule would be convenient.

She can consider her own subject without concluding how her whole life works. Alyona notices that after viewing, she stays on the page longer than intended. This is concrete enough to consider changing access. She need not first prove that viewing caused all her feelings or that the page's disappearance would remove them. If the change does not bring the desired result, the earlier observation does not become false. It described an action and its place in one evening, not a cause or a promised solution to all the pain of a breakup.

IV. Boundaries can vary by subject

Alyona wants to see fewer new photographs while receiving a message about returning belongings. These wishes need not contradict each other. Viewing public material and separately discussing a task have different scopes. She may find an available way to reduce the first and preserve the second, if real conditions allow. The article describes no specific settings and does not claim that every platform offers the required feature. The necessary technical step depends on the chosen service and the person's circumstances; our task is first to name precisely which participation she wants to change.

Other combinations are possible. Someone may keep an archive and stop new conversation, retain a shared work channel without reading a personal page, or prefer a more complete end to voluntary contact. There is no compulsory staircase by which everyone must gradually become ready for friendship. There are different subjects and present responses. Choosing a limited format does not mean being ready to open everything else eventually. If Alyona later

reconsiders, that will be a new response, not proof that the first was unserious and did not deserve respect.

Distinguishing subjects does not require a complicated system for managing a relationship. Sometimes one simple limit is enough. The more items there are, the easier it becomes to turn them into another permanent occupation centred on the other person. Alyona can begin with what actually affects her evening and leave the rest undecided until a real question arises. She need not describe every internal change of habit to Igor. But clarity may be needed where another person must understand a new condition affecting a shared matter. Her own viewing and a known shared agreement are different: one does not require someone else's approval; the other should not secretly change within a unilateral account.

A group chat adds a separate subject. It may concern a work meeting or a gathering that does not belong exclusively to the former couple. Alyona may want to keep access to the needed topic while seeing fewer neighbouring conversations. Others' convenience does not cancel her choice, but her boundary does not make their space a private breakup channel. Sometimes changing her own participation is enough; sometimes separate clarity is needed with people affected by the new arrangement. No available format can be promised for every group. First, it matters to understand which connection is actually needed and which participants must answer for themselves about its conditions.

V. A channel for a shared task does not mean permanent availability

To return belongings, the two people choose a known subject and an appropriate way to discuss it. Alyona's answer about timing should not silently mean agreement to talk about feelings. Igor's answer about a prepared box likewise does not promise a conversation about every new event. They can name what is being discussed if that clarity is needed and safe. But one message does not turn a proposed scope into a shared agreement. It matters to see what was actually accepted, what nobody confirmed and which factual questions remain separate from voluntary personal communication.

Such a channel need not be instantaneous. If a response time has not been agreed, one person cannot declare every delay a violation of the arrangement convenient to them. At the same time, no response may have practical consequences: an unconfirmed handover has not happened. This can be taken into account without inferring a hidden cause. The article assigns no acceptable deadline and determines no legal consequences. It preserves the difference between an expectation, a known condition and an actual action. Respect for someone else's life does not require treating missing information as received or making a plan as though that information were a firm foundation.

Where contact is used for threats, control or punishment for refusing, ordinary negotiation is not proposed as a test. Neither a written format nor a separate channel guarantees protection by itself. Suitable safe support needs to take circumstances into account; immediate danger requires accessible local emergency help. Specific services have not been checked here. Even in a calm situation, a third person should not be involved without clear agreement to their role. Help with a handover should not silently become a mission to regain access to a personal conversation one participant has already declined.

VI. An archive preserves the past without promising continuation

Alyona opens old messages and reads about shared plans. The message mattered then. A saved record does not make those plans current now. Sometimes someone searches an archive for proof that a present breakup is impossible because earlier words sounded sincere. But past sincerity and today’s agreement belong to different times. They can diverge without entirely denying what happened before. We do not determine which feelings were true. We simply do not turn saved text into permanent authority over another person’s current response.

What to do with an archive depends on its subject. It may contain memorable messages, necessary information or sensitive material about third parties. The article neither orders everything deleted nor declares preservation obligatory. Significant legal or safety circumstances may require particular information and support; a small exercise does not decide this. In an ordinary voluntary choice, someone can ask what access to the archive is needed now. Keeping material and returning to it every evening are different actions. It may be possible to change the second without reaching a final decision about the first.

An old message does not become permission for new distribution. It may have had another recipient, concerned a private subject or included someone absent from the present disagreement. Alyona can discuss her own experience, but saved correspondence is not automatically available as public proof of who was right. This is no universal legal rule about documents. It is an ethical question about an additional action: what is being disclosed now, to whom and with what participation by those affected? A memory of closeness does not remove this boundary, just as a breakup does not turn the entire shared past into ownerless territory without responsible participants.

Memory and a search for a solution can also be distinguished. Alyona rereads a funny story and is glad it happened. Another evening, she scrolls through messages seeking a single phrase that will explain the whole breakup. The outward action looks similar, but the question is different. For her own choice, it helps to notice this difference without permanently sorting every memory into useful or harmful. An archive need be neither a remedy nor a dangerous object in itself. It can hold a significant past without containing the answer now sought from it in place of an unknown person in the present.

VII. Acquaintances should not become another route for observation

Alyona asks a mutual acquaintance to tell her what Igor publishes if she stops looking herself. Outwardly, access has changed, but attention's subject remains the same. She can notice this without accusing herself or the acquaintance. If she wants to reduce observation, transferring it to another person may not solve the task she chose. The acquaintance also receives a role they may not understand: regularly reporting on someone's private life and sustaining an unfinished conversation between former partners. A friendly willingness to listen does not mean agreement to become a permanent intermediary in that observation.

She can ask for other participation: not bringing new information without a reason, talking about her own difficult evening or helping with a clearly described matter. The other person can agree, offer less or refuse. Their relationship with Igor is not Alyona's property and need not confirm her decision. A shared circle can continue without a single verdict on the breakup. There is no need to require acquaintances to stop speaking to one person as proof of respect for another. Significant actual harm and safety require consideration of their own; ordinary liking and group membership do not establish them automatically.

Information sometimes arrives unexpectedly. An acquaintance mentions Igor's trip without knowing Alyona wants to hear less about him. One instance does not prove intentional violation. She can clarify her limit if she wants to continue the conversation and conditions permit. But another person's response is not promised. Alyona can change her own participation without arranging a loyalty test or demanding explanations for every future exception. The limit remains a proposal concerning a particular subject. It does not authorise control of every topic others discuss, but allows her to name more precisely the conversation in which she is presently willing to participate.

VIII. One's own public account also has boundaries

Alyona wants to say the relationship has ended because acquaintances still ask about shared plans. Her present life really is part of her experience. But an account may include information about Igor, someone else's words or recognisable circumstances involving others. The first person does not make every detail exclusively her own. She can distinguish a necessary statement about herself from details added to confirm her entire version of the past. Complete silence and a public hearing are not the only options. A limited account can remain truthful without pretending that everyone involved agrees with each judgement it contains.

A publication need not win an audience's approval for a personal decision to count as real. Alyona can end the relationship without a collective scene of recognition or an explanation

convincing enough for every acquaintance. The article does not cancel existing obligations or questions concerning real harm: they need consideration in the appropriate setting. Our subject is narrower — wanting an audience to witness a new situation. She can choose the extent of disclosure for its actual purpose rather than expecting others' reactions to confirm the entire meaning of the breakup and finally grant her permission never to return to the earlier conversation.

Igor may describe the event differently. This does not automatically oblige Alyona to keep reading and disputing every statement. Significant consequences may require a separate decision, but our example cannot prescribe that course for everyone. In an ordinary situation, it helps to distinguish one's own clarity from wanting to control every other person's impression. The first may be limited and manageable; the second often exceeds available action. We do not promise that accepting limits will feel pleasant. It leaves uncertainty and disagreement without requiring a personal page to become an endless courtroom delivering a final verdict on the relationship.

IX. Revising a boundary does not cancel the earlier response

After some time, Alyona finds her earlier limit inconvenient: a shared matter needs one more detail clarified. She can change how that matter is discussed without restoring all earlier access. One additional answer need not mean resuming a personal connection. Nor does it prove that the boundary was hypocrisy. Life brings new circumstances, and a manageable choice can change with them. Its current scope matters. Where someone else will rely on a new condition, actual clarity is needed rather than an assumption of agreement based on an internal decision of one's own.

Another possibility is that Alyona spends a whole evening viewing the page again. This event can be named separately. It does not require declaring the entire choice a failure or making the next action a punishment. What happened this time, what was she seeking, and does she now want a different limit? These questions concern an observed episode; they do not diagnose her capacity for independence. She can return to her earlier choice, change it or abandon the trial. The article prescribes no correct sequence and does not promise that every renewed visit necessarily delays recovery by a particular amount of time.

New voluntary contact is also a separate question. If Alyona wants to write, the wish is insufficient to create a shared conversation. If Igor suggests talking, she can decline even if she previously replied. Earlier closeness, a brief handover and present agreement are different. Mutual interest may arise but is not promised. Considering an invitation does not mean approving every format; refusing does not require rewriting the past as one long mistake. A boundary is more accurate when it answers to a real subject and today's choice rather than serving as a sign of compulsory firmness before others.

A boundary can be revised without new contact too. Alyona chose a rule about viewing time that was too strict and finds she spends much of the day thinking about keeping it. She can seek a more manageable arrangement without reporting this to Igor as a new position in a dispute. The subject remains her attention. Change need not become a competition with an earlier choice: a stricter option is not always more precise, and a less strict one does not automatically mean abandoning independence. She can assess the practical convenience and cost of an action while leaving a final explanation of her feelings open.

X. Access can change without issuing orders to feelings

Alyona may read the page less and still miss Igor. These two conditions do not contradict each other. An action has one subject; a feeling may have another rhythm, which the article does not determine. There is no need to promise that memory will disappear when access changes. Conversely, a calm evening does not prove that all further participation is now safe or suitable. A particular change can be noticed without turning it into a forecast for an entire future life. A boundary remains a way of arranging participation, not an assessment of how correctly someone should experience an important breakup.

Our chosen trial may have a modest result: the handover is discussed separately, and viewing takes up less time. Perhaps this will not happen. In that case, an unresolved question should not be declared settled merely because a technical step was taken. If different support is needed, it can be sought under real conditions without requiring a former partner’s page to provide something it does not offer. This neither devalues the past nor establishes one correct form of help. Someone can acknowledge that a small voluntary trial does not match the scale of their current difficulty and leave it aside.

A digital boundary need not be a public verdict on another person. It may mean that for now, I do not want to receive this material, discuss this topic or keep the earlier access route open. Such a choice does not turn real obligations into nothing, but obligations do not automatically grant rights over an entire new life either. Between these limits, a particular subject can remain while the rest is unknown. Not every story ends in one clear statement. Yet one manageable boundary may be more precise than requiring oneself first to stop feeling everything that once connected two people.

What this means in practice

For calm individual reflection, you can choose one action: viewing a page, reading an archive, waiting for a message or receiving information through an acquaintance. What actually happens, what are you seeking, and is this participation known to be offered by the other person? There is no need to list every mistake or prove why a feeling arose. The practice is voluntary and untested as a method. You need not make a record or show it to anyone; in sensitive circumstances, real safety matters more than a convenient exercise.

Then separate one shared matter, if it actually remains. What information does it need, what is already agreed and what is unknown? Do not determine legal obligations from this list. Significant consequences require facts and appropriate separate help. A possible limited channel does not mean a personal conversation about everything, while no reply does not mean an action has occurred. Both limits can be taken into account without assigning a hidden cause to a delay or treating one’s proposal as an agreement already accepted.

If you want to change access, choose one manageable step in an actually available format. The platform’s precise capabilities need checking separately; this article does not promise them. Do not make the step a hidden test of your former partner’s reaction. Do not ask an acquaintance to continue observation you decided to reduce without understanding the subject and obtaining their agreement. Afterwards, note only what is observed: what changed, what stayed the same and whether the chosen limit suits you now. Feelings need not disappear, and a technical action does not establish safety or emotional closure.

Where there are threats, control or coercion, there is no need to arrange another shared contact to test the ability to negotiate. Suitable safe support taking real conditions into account matters more; a particular local route has not been checked here. You can skip, change or stop the trial. One separate answer about a task, less space given to viewing in an evening, or recognising a need for other help may be enough. Neither friendship, complete silence nor lasting calm is assigned as the compulsory result.

Key quotation

> *“All that and more her smile had said”*

Darrow reads Anna’s expression: Edith Wharton, The Reef, Book I, Chapter I, the paragraph about their meeting in London. A short narrative fragment in the original English. This is meaning within a character’s literary perception, not established knowledge of another person’s intention. Source.

Connections between traditions

Line of thought	Shared question and limit of the comparison
Wharton’s literary scene ↔ reading a publication	A recipient may add meaning to a known signal. The novel does not establish a present person’s motive and is not messaging research.
Marshall’s correlational survey ↔ one’s own viewing	Observation and connection status differ. An association does not prove causation or promise benefit from removing a contact.
A shared task ↔ ended closeness	A necessary subject may remain. Discussing it does not imply permanent emotional availability.
An archive ↔ present agreement	Saved text concerns the past. It does not automatically keep earlier plans in force.
One’s own account ↔ someone else’s private history	People can talk about their experience. The first person does not remove the participation of those whose information is disclosed.

Primary sources and research

1. Edith Wharton. The Reef, Book I, Chapter I. A 1912 novel; the fixed Gutenberg 283 HTML version identifies release on 12 July 2008 and an update on 19 August 2017. Current catalogue and cache metadata give different digital-version dates. Metadata and a selected continuous opening context concerning the telegram and remembered meeting were read; complete reading of the novel or chapter is not claimed. Both short quotations concern this context. The separately copyrighted audio version 9291 was not used; universal permission for all jurisdictions is not asserted.

2. Tara C. Marshall. Facebook Surveillance of Former Romantic Partners: Associations with PostBreakup Recovery and Personal Growth. Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 2012, 15(10), 521–526; DOI 10.1089/cyber.2012.0125. Selected publication information, participant, surveillance measurement, result and causal-limitation discussion contexts were read. The publisher page currently states CC BY 4.0. A survey association is not a trial of the voluntary practice; modern platform functions and individual outcomes have not been checked.

Tags

breakup, digital boundaries, viewing, page, publication, message, recipient, uncertainty, intention, attention, archive, memory, agreement, shared task, returning belongings, channel, response, delay, support, acquaintances, intermediary, private life, public account, reconsideration, voluntary practice, safety, independence, Edith Wharton, The Reef, Marshall, correlation, United Wisdom

About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she aims to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life among people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.