



2022

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Recommended Citation

Villarreal, Malia (2022) "How to Be a Ghostbuster," *Family Perspectives*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/familyperspectives/vol3/iss1/7>

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How to Be a Ghostbuster

By Malia Villarreal

Every Halloween we blast the radio and listen to the catchy tune of this spooky classic —*If there's something strange in your neighborhood, who ya gonna call? Ghostbusters!*¹ The smash hit recorded for the 80s film, *Ghostbusters*, describes the entire plot of the movie which entails people chasing and busting ghosts that cause chaos in their town. Even after Halloween ends, however, the idea of ghosts wreaking havoc in our lives is still very much alive. Even more spooky is the idea that ghosts aren't just the dead; they appear to be alive — in the dating realm, as well.

According to *Psychology Today* blogger Janice Vilhauer, ghosting is believing someone cares about

you and then they disappear from your life without any explanation.² We have all felt the anxiety and stress that comes as we try to navigate a new relationship. Our minds begin to race with thoughts like, “*I bet he's just busy; life can be busy,*” or my personal favorite, “*She must be a slow texter and is waiting the appropriate four days to respond.*” The idea of cutting communication with a romantic interest is not a new phenomenon, but with technology it has become easier and quicker. Within the last five years or so we have finally put a name to the pain, taking us one step closer to understanding and hopefully overcoming this dating doozy.³

So, let's take a step back and ponder for a moment—why would someone choose to ghost?

Reasons for ghosting are diverse and vary from person to person. One person might have a hard time dealing with confrontation, while another person may not want to inflict pain on their partner. Communicating difficult feelings and thoughts is hard enough, especially when those emotions concern another person. Which ever end you find yourself on the ghosting spectrum, it is an unpleasant place to be.

Although we may never understand the reason we've been ghosted, how we react to rejection is the real issue here.⁴ Just because we have a spooky situation in our lives doesn't mean we should fall into the pit of despair. We can stand up for ourselves, become confident in the dating game, and embrace the learning experience. Essentially, we can choose to be a Ghostbuster! Here are a few ideas for how to be a Ghostbuster in your own life!

First, the best thing to do with stressful rejection is to breathe and consider the situation. When your

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heart feels under attack, it is easy to strike back without thinking. Professional Ghostbusters are strategic and organized before they combat the paranormal world. You must be also. Consider the Ghost and think about where that person is coming from. What might they be

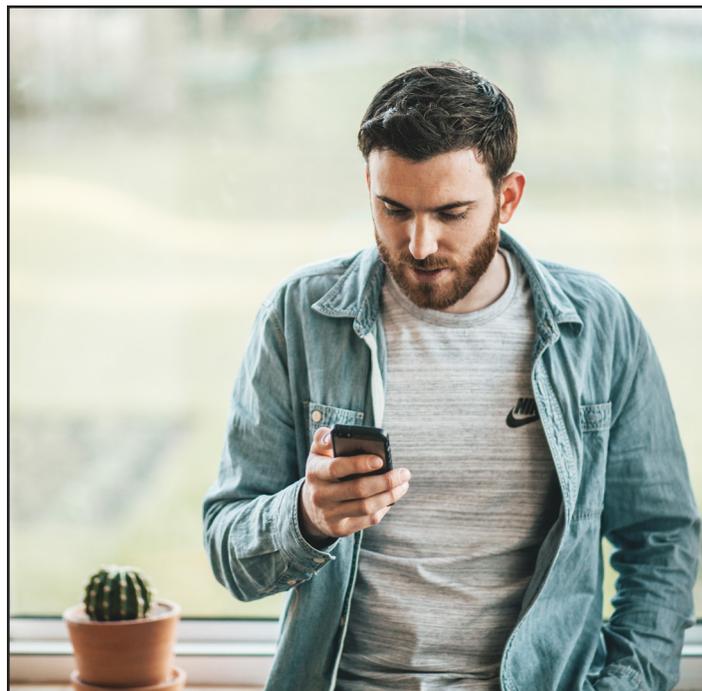


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feeling about this situation? By putting yourself in their shoes, you will be more prepared to respond civilly to the situation.⁵

Second, without blasting your Ghost into smithereens, consider how you can “clarify your perspective.” Psychology Today blogger Leon Seltzer counsels to state your feelings and ask for understanding of their actions. Dating can be awkward sometimes, but rejection almost always is. Let's be honest, no one in this situation is having the time of their lives. Choose to seek out, understand, and listen to your partner's point of view. Seltzer suggests using phrases such as: *“I noticed that _____; Could you please explain _____ to me? I just want to understand.”*⁶

Finally, becoming a professional Ghostbuster means choosing not to be haunted by the experience, but instead embracing it as a learning opportunity.

Rejection can hurt and often leaves scars, and scar tissue is stronger than regular skin. Through adversity we can learn and progress. Feelings of rejection may be painful, but they are never lasting. After we've said our peace and have civilly approached the situation, we have done all that we can. Sometimes we can't take the Ghost out of the person, but we can take ourselves out of the haunting.

It is true that we can't control the actions of others, but becoming a Ghostbuster means taking control of our own emotions and actions. Let's step away from messy situations with a clear mind, confidence, and enlightenment. Be sure to remember: *If there's something strange in your **dating life**; who-ya-gonna-be? A Ghostbuster!*

Endnotes

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