

## Need to Know

Emily Silverstein saw no signs that her ex-boyfriend might hurt her.

# The Hidden Danger of Breakups



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Emily with friend Cecelia Ticktin (top, right), and roommate Sally Quinn (bottom, far left)

# “WHAT KEVIN DID TO HER WAS TERRIBLE,” SAYS A FRIEND. “I’M TRYING TO FORGIVE HIM. EMILY WOULD.”

Columbine, Virginia Tech, the Oklahoma City bombing. Kevin kept agreeing, saying, ‘It’s just so messed up.’ He was genuinely concerned. Typical Kevin.” Around 1 a.m., the crowd broke up. Kevin hugged everyone good-bye. Friends say that he wasn’t drunk and he seemed happy.

Earlier that evening, Emily had led a discussion on gay rights at Peace House, then went to the library and finally back to her room, where she

texted Noor to say *good night*, ending her message with “I’ll call you tomorrow.” Those are her last known words.

At some point after that, for reasons that are still unclear, Emily went to Kevin’s house. What happened next is detailed in the stark language of the police report. Around 6 a.m., Kevin phoned a friend of both his and Emily’s, asking her to come over. She arrived to find Emily’s bloodied body in the bathtub and called 911. Minutes after officers showed up, Kevin came outside and confessed; later, at police headquarters, he added more details.

He described getting into a physical argument with Emily. She was on the floor as he choked her and then grabbed a steak knife off his desk and stabbed her in the neck. For 15 minutes afterward, he just sat next

to her. Then, “concerned about the blood,” he removed Emily’s pants and wrapped them around her neck before carrying her body and placing it on a shower curtain in the tub. Kevin volunteered to police that he had marijuana in his apartment and he’d quit taking the prescribed antidepressant Zoloft.

The trial is set for this month; he has pleaded not guilty to criminal homicide and other charges. If convicted, he will die in prison; Pennsylvania grants no parole for first-degree homicide. So like many men who kill a partner and then commit suicide, Kevin will have in effect destroyed his own life after taking Emily’s.

At the pretrial proceedings, young friends wrestled with mourning Emily and, at the same time, the loss of Kevin. “Emily was a forgiving person,” Antonia says. “What he did to her was very terrible. I’m trying my hardest as a good friend to Emily to forgive him. Emily would.”

## Remembering Emily

Her family has created The EMILY Fund: Education, Mentorship, Inspiration, Leadership, and Youth for a Better World. It awards scholarships to young activists who apply by writing an essay about what they have done to help create a more peaceful and sustainable world.

“Emily’s life shouldn’t be defined by how it ended,” insists Sally Quinn, Emily’s sophomore roommate. “If she were here now, she’d deserve as much attention for who she is and what she stands for as she’s getting for dying. The world lost out on someone who would have made a difference.” ■

## HOW TO SAY GOOD-BYE SAFELY

*If you or the people close to you have any gut feelings that your soon-to-be ex is capable of abuse, take these precautions.*

● Before you end it, tell a friend, and if your ex has a key to your place, stay with someone you trust.

Alert friends, family, and coworkers not to speak with him.

● Break up by phone or e-mail. It may seem unkind, but put your well-being first. There’s no magic script to prevent violence—you could share the things you like about him, but give your reasons for leaving only once and keep things short.

● Change your routine. Stop going to places you fre-

quented together. Make your profile on social-networking sites private, and change passwords.

● If he refuses to accept the breakup, seek professional help from a counselor, police, or the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-799-SAFE. If he makes actual threats, call 911 immediately.

NOTE: Plan ahead—safety-planning work sheets along with info on warning signs and restraining orders are available at [thesafespace.org](http://thesafespace.org).

SOURCES: CRISTINA ESCOBAR, SENIOR COORDINATOR OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR BREAK THE CYCLE A DATING-VIOLENCE ADVOCACY GROUP; JENNIFER STORM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF A VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA