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Our Hopes Of Fleeing To A Distant Planet Were Just Blown Away By Space Wind – CAFE

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A lot of conditions have to be met for a planet to be habitable: water, the right atmosphere, the right temperature, and now, scientists find, a weak stellar wind.

It's not a gust of air like the winds here on Earth, but rather flows of particles ejected from a star. Wind with stardust in it, if you will, but without any of the magic you'd expect from that description.

It turns out that stardust — magical or no — isn't such a good thing. A team led by researchers from [Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory and Princeton University](#) discovered that stellar winds that are too strong may erode a planet's atmosphere, making it incapable of supporting life. So, places we once thought could be habitable [based on their temperature](#) might not be. As all of us following the news know, it's not the first time a ball of hot gas spewed out a wind that battered away our shot at a peaceful, healthy life.

If these findings are true, they just threw a universe-sized wrench into our own plans for escaping the blowhards here on Earth. That

sound you hear is us crossing a lot of planets off the habitable list, along with the wails of future generations and the withering of all our hopes and dreams.

And just like how inescapable forces pull us towards blustery, self-identified stars no matter how hard we try to flee, the planets bearing the [brunt of this stellar wind](#) are stuck orbiting the star causing it.

Thanks to this stellar wind discovery, scientists may also have to modify the Drake Equation—which estimates how many alien civilizations exist in our galaxy—but not in a good way. Fewer habitable planets likely means fewer aliens, decreasing our already small chances of an extraterrestrial encounter. So, no, an errant laser beam from a passing spaceship probably won't snap up certain people from the face of the Earth, restoring our happiness and the satisfaction that things are finally right in the world.

The researchers also say it's hard to accurately talk about planets that are light years away and that it takes hundreds of millions of years for stellar winds to erode an atmosphere to the extent that it can no longer support life. Here on planet Earth, however, we don't need to theorize about the planet-destroying effects of stellar winds. We already know how relentless a life-sucking windbag can be.