

Can You Be Friends With an Ex?



By Melanie Mar

Lovers cannot be friends until both parties have a new lover. Many factors come into play with regards as to whether you can remain friends with a former loved one.

Did the relationship end on good or bad terms? If the two of you merely grew apart and perhaps the physical intimacy died in the relationship, then you may have already started developing a friendship within the relationship. It is far easier to continue an already-established friendship post-breakup. However, if one of the parties did something immoral or unethical and hurt the other one deeply, the chances are certainly much slimmer.

Does one of you not have the ability to remain friends mentally or emotionally? One's life experiences and role models (i.e. if you are a product of divorced parents, did they maintain a friendship post-breakup?) will dictate one's emotional ability and openness to establishing a future friendship.

Is it in your nature to remain friendly after an intimate relationship? I have clients who literally go into relationships telling their partner that, if this doesn't work out, there will not be a friendship afterward, which makes your desire to maintain a friendship impossible, however disheartening this truth may be to you. I have other clients who are friends with most everyone they have dated and would feel sad at the thought of losing that person from their lives.

If you're currently in a relationship that you know has a limited shelf-life, but you desire to eventually have some form of friendship post-breakup, here are some things to consider:

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1. Why is the relationship breaking down, and is it mutual? A lot of relationships fade to grey.
2. Were you friends before you became lovers, and had you put in the foundations of friendship before you became intimate?
3. What will this person positively bring to you and your life as a friend, and vice versa?

After asking yourself these questions and writing down the answers, you'll have a clearer vision of whether or not a friendship is something viable. Here are a few more points to remember:

1. If you want to end this relationship, and your partner is

unprepared, unaware, or wanting to continue the relationship, it is unrealistic to think he or she would want a friendship with you.

2. If you had a secured friendship prior to becoming intimate, the chances of you establishing a friendship are higher. If you became intimate sooner rather than later, having not gotten to know the other person as an individual, and your connection was short-term and sexually driven, then it could be less likely.

3. Are your lives better by having each other in it? Can you rely on this person? If you're in need in any way, is this person going to be there for you? If the answer is yes, that is a true friend. Nobody needs another type of friend, so make sure the ones you choose to have in your life are worthy.

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Now, if your relationship has already expired and you hope for a friendship with an ex, the only thing that you can do is lay yourself bare. Put yourself out there and ask your ex if enough time has passed for feelings to heal and if he or she is willing and wanting to be your friend. There are many famous faces that have achieved a post-split friendship; examples include Demi Moore and Bruce Willis, Reese Witherspoon and Ryan Phillippe, and, most recently, Courteney Cox and David Arquette. And some relationships actually work better as friends. Engaging in a friendship with someone who knows the most intimate parts of your life and accepts you despite them means that the friendship will be stronger and much more successful than any romantic relationship could have been for the two of you.

Ultimately, there are no hard and fast rules on whether or not you can be friends with your ex. Each split is the same as each relationship: completely different. The most important thing to consider is...do you both really want it?