

Relationship Expert Talks About Being Friends With Your Ex



By Debbie Ceresa

“Today, I marry my friend.” It’s a common declaration of love shared between two people as part of their wedding ceremony. We promise “to love and cherish until death do us part.” But what happens when the relationship and love you once shared dies? Is it possible to stay friends with your ex?

Relationship Expert Shares Her Thoughts on a Friendship With An Ex

“If you don’t have children or financial reasons tying you together and you want to stay friends, you need to think about how the friendship would work,” advises Dr. John Aiken, a clinical psychologist and [relationship expert](#), in the article [“Can You Be Friends With Your Ex?”](#) Even if you share children with your former partner, Aiken refers to the importance of establishing boundaries, measuring expectations, and evaluating the true motivations for wanting to keep your ex in your life. We see this challenge in the recent celebrity break-ups of Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck as well as Gwen Stefani and Gavin Rossdale as they move forward with separate lives yet combined parenting.

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Sometimes, the reason the relationship ended supports the need to cut ties and walk away. However, as a relationship expert, I know that, many times, if you struggled on a romantic level, a friendship can still flourish. If you choose to develop a friendship with your ex, here are some things to remember:

1. Mourn the loss of the relationship you once knew: You’ve ended your relationship. For whatever reason, you’re no longer romantically together. Now is the time to stop the fighting and blaming and get on the path to recovery. “Give each other time to mourn the death of the relationship,” advises Ami Angelowicz in the article “The longer you two were together, the longer it will take before you’re ready for friendship. It could be two months or two years – feel it out. You’ll know when the time is right because both of you will feel ready for it. Let hearts heal and flames fizzle out before hopping on the friendship train.” You’ll have challenges along the way, but you’ll find that healing and forgiveness will bring you new insights. Once you step away from the negative thoughts,

you'll find yourself a new person who is able to renew your old friendship with your ex.

2. Set clear boundaries: Recognize that you're now at a different stage in your relationship with your ex. All couples have their own song and dance, but now is the time to change yours. This new dance could bring back what you miss about your lost friendship. "The same rules don't apply anymore, so toss out old expectations," advises Dr. Gabrielle Morrissey, a sex and dating expert for bodyandsoul.com. "Setting clear and defined boundaries means that, when you become attached again, you'll have an emotionally healthy relationship with your ex." Why not treat your ex like your other friends, acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses? Focus on your ex's friendship strengths, but keep the relationship at an appropriate level. Just because you're rekindling your friendship doesn't mean you're looking to rekindle your romantic relationship.

3. Move forward: Be angry. Be jealous. You can even spend time feeling hurt. Then move on. It's essential for you to date other people and make new friends in different social circles. "You might not realize it, but keeping your ex around as a friend after a break-up can keep you from moving on," observes writer Karley Sciortino in the article "Breathless: Should You Be Friends With Your Ex?" "Moving on is hard, and the impulse to keep your ex in your life can be really strong – we all get it. But you first need to give yourself a window to move on physically and emotionally."

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Reaching out to a former love certainly has its rewards. You need to allow yourself time to mourn the loss of the relationship and embrace new parameters as well as set clear boundaries as to what those parameters include. Then, after moving forward by welcoming opportunities for love to

become a part of your life, you can enjoy the support of a former partner who knows you better than anyone else while you gain strength and focus on finding a new path to personal happiness.

Debbie is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist® and the author to the #1 bestselling memoir A Beautiful View, available on Amazon.com. A Beautiful View documents her journey through her husband's battle with cancer, which ultimately ended with his death. She has experienced grief firsthand and is well equipped to aid others in the recovery process, whether with death or divorce. For more information about Debbie and how to recover from your loss, please visit debbieceresa.com.

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