

# CAN YOU STAY FRIENDS AFTER DIVORCE?

**READ A TEXT ABOUT HOW TO STAY FRIENDS WITH YOUR EX, AND FOR QUESTIONS 1 TO 8, MATCH THE HEADINGS TO THE SECTIONS. THERE ARE THREE EXTRA HEADINGS THAT YOU DON'T NEED TO USE.**

Divorces are rarely friendly. Sometimes, when there has been abuse or manipulation, it is unwise to maintain the relationship, and if one of the spouses is clinging to the hope that the relationship might reconcile, it is hard to remain friends. But sometimes it is necessary to keep in touch with your ex for the sake of children. So what is the best way to go about it?

**1**

It is natural that you and your partner will be experiencing all kinds of emotions, like hurt, resentment and anger, and these won't go away instantly. So allow yourself to rant, cry and go through the stages of grief. Allow your partner this time too, and don't expect them to be feeling the same as you.

**2**

Divorce means you'll no longer be doing the same things with your partner that you used to do. Therefore, if you intend to stay in touch, you will have to learn to be together in a different way. It's not always easy to identify this new dynamic, and don't worry if it doesn't come naturally. If something doesn't work for you, let your partner know and suggest an alternative. If something works, let your partner know that too.

**3**

If you have agreed to 'just be friends', then do just that! Treat your ex in the same way as your other friends. Send messages and jokes, offer and accept help and hang out together. It might feel awkward at first, but keep at it and it will begin to come more naturally. If it feels more comfortable, meet up in groups rather than one-to-one.



4

Although you are friends, remember that a friendship and an intimate relationship are different. Some things are no longer appropriate, such as calling each other by pet names and discussing personal matters. You may decide it's best to avoid certain topics and keep the relationship fairly superficial, at least in the short term.

5

While spending time with your ex, you may be tempted to get closer by hugging, kissing or cuddling. But resist the temptation! Remember you broke up for a reason, and if you allow yourself to get close again, history may repeat itself, and someone may get hurt.

6

It's tempting to use interactions with exes as an opportunity to belittle, complain and vent your frustrations. However, doing so will not help your relationship to move on to a better place. Instead, be courteous, considerate and calm, and avoid getting defensive. And listen to your partner with the aim of understanding their needs, and troubleshoot problems together.

7

Most likely, your hopes and expectations of your ex have been dashed, and you feel unable to depend on your partner to fulfil promises. However, like in any relationship, you need to be able to rely on each other. Do little things to show you can be depended on: follow up on your promises, don't talk about your private matters and tell the truth. That will encourage your partner to do the same.

8

Although your relationship has inevitably gone through bad times, you had good times together too. In order to move on, you needn't pretend that those moments never existed. Look at old photos and reminisce. Enjoy the times you shared and your partner's good qualities. Doing this will help you to let go of painful memories and let your relationship move on to a better place.

## HEADING OPTIONS

- Set boundaries
- Don't be alone with your ex
- Work on your communication skills
- Do what friends do
- Keep trying new things
- Don't let your feelings guide you
- Focus on the positive
- Don't get intimate
- Find a new normal
- Build trust
- Listen to your feelings