

How to Exercise Forgiveness

Learn about how not forgiving an ex-spouse can hurt your recovery from the divorce process. You could be allowing your ex to continue controlling some aspects of your life, so learn how to forgive them with these great tips from Len Stauffenger.

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Categories: Coping with Divorce, Divorce and Annulment, Divorce Recovery, Health and Well-Being, Spirituality and Divorce, Your Divorce Stories

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It's essential that you forgive your ex-spouse. Why? Because as long as you hold the grudge, it holds you back. When you hold a grudge against someone, when you refuse to forgive him or her, you have this invisible connection with him or her. It continues to give them power over you.

I'll give you a real-life example. Years ago, a woman I know followed her husband from New York to Arizona for his job. A couple years after they were out in Arizona, he started having an affair with a woman he'd met. My friend, of course, was the last to know.

Her husband would literally take this other woman on long holidays and charge it to the family credit card. Of course, he lied about it; he told his wife it was company business. The neighbors knew he was with someone else because he would send his wife home with their three small children to New York, and while they were in New York, he and the girlfriend were playing house at their home. Sound familiar? It happens all the time, but that doesn't make it right.

After their divorce, my friend had to leave her home in Phoenix, a place she had come to love, and move back to Buffalo, where she had never dreamed she would return. She began to raise her children by herself.

As you can imagine, this was quite a different life than she envisioned when she got married. Her ex-husband ended up getting married to the other woman and having children with her.

For a few years, his first wife couldn't forgive him. That's understandable. But look at it from the outside. He married the other woman, had two more kids and kept going to work every day. She, on the other hand, had been a good wife and a great mom and what does she get in return for it? Betrayal. Humiliation. Being cheated on and lied to. She got to trade in her nice new house in Phoenix, Arizona for a small house she shared with her single cousin in Buffalo.

Unjust? You bet. Unfair? You better believe it.

For a short time she held a grudge. She was angry. Perfectly understandable. But what did it accomplish? Did it stop him from marrying again or having more children? No. Did it stop him from

having a career? No. Unfair as it might seem, it stopped her. It stopped her from being fully present with her children. It stopped her from having a relationship with a good man.

Become Objective

And then one day she forgave him. Which does not mean in any way, shape, or form that she agrees with what he did or that she approves of it or condones it. It does not mean that what he did had any honor to it. Just the contrary. He had no honor, he had no integrity, and she knows that. They're not friends, and she doesn't care to be in his life. They live separate lives now. That's what divorce means: You each go your separate way.

She came to realize that the lack of honor and the lack of integrity was his problem, not hers. She came to realize that there really is karma or whatever you want to call it. She realized, truly, that what goes around comes around. She came to realize that it wasn't her place to punish him, even if she could, and of course she couldn't.

She came to realize that he had actually done her a favor because she was much, much better off without a man like that in her life. She came to realize that she had married a man who was basically selfish and self-centered and that in some weird way, she had known that even before she married him. But she married him anyway. She came to realize he was no happier with his second wife than he had been with her.

She came to realize that even though his second marriage lasted longer than the marriage with her, he was still searching for that something that was missing. He was still not satisfied.

Her kids would come home after a brief visit with their dad and talk about how Dad and their step mom were always bickering at each other. And while he would never admit that to her (because again, we're always concerned with looking good and not looking bad), she knew the kids were telling the truth.

She knew from having been married to him that he did have those selfish qualities and he did easily become frustrated. She could tell from the brief comments that the same issues she had with him were just being played out again with a different woman.

Getting Over

This article has been edited and excerpted from the book *Getting Over It: Wisdom for Divorced Parents* with permission by MacKenzie Publishing, LLC, copyright © 2010, Len Stauffenger is a nationally certified attorney who understands and practices transformational energy. He is a catalyst for healing and responsible for helping countless individuals achieve success in their lives.