



## Tips for Working with an Uncooperative EX! Why Forgiveness is Key

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Hurt, anger, and guilt can bind two people together as tightly as love does. Bitterness against your ex-partner creates a prison and a prisoner. Ironically, though, the bitter person who won't let go of their hurt and anger is actually the prisoner. The only real solution, as crazy as it may seem, is to forgive the other. The pain from past offenses is real, and the anger may be justified. However, true happiness is never reached when the burden of anger, hurt, and guilt are carried around and the conflict places children in the middle of a war they did nothing to start. Forgiveness doesn't mend a broken relationship or repair the emotional damage done. Forgiveness simply writes it off as if it were a bad debt that will never be repaid. The following are a few tips on forgiveness:

1. Forgiveness is a choice, a decision we make with the intellect. We don't forgive because it has stopped hurting. The letting go of the emotional pain and hurt follows the decision to forgive, and not the other way around.
2. Pick one small offense and forgive that first. Often it helps to not tackle the mountain of hurt we have endured all at the same time.
3. Communicating to the other that you have forgiven them is optional and, in fact, may be detrimental if the other person does not feel like they have been offensive.
4. Don't confuse forgiveness with accountability. It is possible to forgive someone and still hold them accountable for their actions (not for revenge or personal gain). For example, a spouse who drove while intoxicated with the children in the car can be forgiven. However, the children may not be allowed to ride unaccompanied with him or her until they have demonstrated more responsible behavior.
5. Forgiveness only requires one person; it takes two to build trust and reconciliation. Mercy can be extended to someone even when they don't deserve it. However, forgiveness does not require the person to become vulnerable to more abuse. If an employee is caught stealing from their employer, they can be forgiven without being given their job back.
6. Forgiveness empowers the forgiver. Holding onto pain and hurt makes us into a victim. Victims constantly blame others for their circumstances. Forgiveness is the first step toward overcoming your circumstances by choosing to accept your ability to respond differently.

### Conclusion

Just like writing off a bad debt that will never be repaid, forgiveness allows you to move on to bigger and better things.

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The more time you spend trying to collect on the bad debt, or punish the person who didn't pay, the less time you have to re-build your life and future. Working with an ex-partner is difficult. It may take a lot of practice and trial and error to find a way to work together. However, the investment of time and energy is worth it. Learning to work with an ex-partner can literally be the difference between the success and failure for the children involved. If you need more help learning how to work with a difficult ex-partner contact your local Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Office. They will be glad to offer you additional information.

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