

# How to Mend a Friendship

See ways to repair your relationship with your BFF

By [Denise Schipani](#) Posted October 23, 2009 from [WomansDay.com](#)

Friendship woes don't end in junior high. We all mess up sometimes and end up hurting a friend's feelings. But now that we're adults, we can forgive each other as long as we know the mess-up wasn't intentional. If you've ever forgotten your pal's birthday, or had an eye on her ex, here's how to make things right and move on.

## **Faux Pas #1: You Forgot Her Birthday**

The moment you realize the date got away from you, "offer an apology, but not an excuse," says Irene Levine, PhD, professor of psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine, and author of *Best Friends Forever*. An "oops" birthday card or gift and an offer to buy her a drink or lunch are good moves. Remember, too, that how much your friend is hurt by your forgetfulness depends on her birthday-importance meter. If she's super-sensitive (what Dr. Levine calls a "birthday princess"), you may have to work harder to get back in her good graces.

## **Faux Pas #2: You Don't Like Her Husband**

Leave her hubby out of the friendship as much as you can; it's not fair to force her to divide her loyalties, especially if she knows he's not your favorite person. "Remind her how important her friendship is to you, and restrict your time together to girls only," says Dr. Levine. Employ a little diplomacy (or a harmless white lie): no reason you have to detail to her what you don't like about her man.

## **Faux Pas #3: You Are (or Want to Be) Dating Her Ex**

"I'm sure there are friends who have navigated this successfully without causing hurt feelings, but my general advice would be, if you want to keep the friend, avoid the ex," says Elaine Zelle, PhD, associate communications professor at LaSalle University in Philadelphia, who has studied female friendships. This is particularly true if it's a recent breakup, but even long-ago exes can stir up a world of emotion. If you're already involved, be prepared for a painful adjustment period—or even the long-term loss of your friend. But if you're only in the contemplation stage, "talk to her about it, honestly," says Dr. Zelle, which is the only way you can hope to emerge with your friendship intact.

## **Faux Pas #4: You Weren't There for Her at a Crucial Time**

Don't make excuses or offer justifications ("I was just *so* busy that month!"). "That only trivializes her



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experience and makes it seem that your life is more important than hers,” says Dr. Zelle. Instead, admit that you let her down, and that you realize how bad your absence made her feel. Ask, humbly and sincerely, if there’s anything you can do to make it up to her. Then let it go; depending on how hurt she is (and how much other support she had at the time), it may take time for the friendship to fully heal.

#### **Faux Pas #5: You Were Late to Meet Her**

You have to apologize, of course, and offer something to assuage her annoyance, such as picking up the lunch tab. If it’s a recurring problem, “you’re giving her the message that your time is more valuable than hers,” says Dr. Levine. Chronic lateness can seriously damage a friendship. Acknowledge that it’s *you* who has a punctuality problem; it’s nothing she did. Together, come up with a solution, such as meeting someplace she doesn’t mind waiting (a bookstore rather than a street corner), or meeting at your home instead.

#### **Faux Pas #6: You Didn’t Call Her Back...for Months**

Don’t keep putting off calling her—just do it. If you truly have no excuse, “a white lie may be in order,” says Dr. Levine (overtime at work, or a needy family member monopolizing your time). But keep it short and sweet, and then launch right into catching each other up on news. Remember, too, that different friendships have a different “pace,” says Dr. Levine. If this is a friendship that normally allows time to elapse between calls, it may not be as big a deal as you imagine.

#### **Faux Pas #7: You Didn’t Tell Her When Something She Did Hurt You**

“If what your friend did was a one-time event that isn’t likely to happen again, weigh the cost versus the benefit of telling her how you felt,” says Dr. Zelle. Her advice: “Only reveal the hurt if the benefit—a deeper level of trust and understanding in the friendship—outweighs the cost,” otherwise you could be creating distance in the friendship. But if what she did was so hurtful you’re not sure you can spend time with her without it bugging you, talk to her. Keep it simple: “I overheard you talking to Gina about my infertility problems, which I’d asked you to keep private.” Give her a chance to apologize, and see if you can regain trust again.

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