Barriers to Getting Over Past Relationships

Getting over ex-partners or old relationships can be extremely difficult, can haunt you for years and can interfere with you getting into and enjoying new relationships. Here are some factors than can hold you back from moving on with your life and from getting that ex-partner or relationship out of your heart and out of your life for good.

1. Being exhausted. This is often an overlooked factor. When you’re too tired emotionally and physically, your defenses and your ability to utilize coping mechanisms are down. When exhausted, you may be more susceptible to falling into old patterns of behavior, sometimes because you simply don’t have the energy to fight anymore. When you’re exhausted, your judgment, thinking and reasoning are clouded and you may engage in behavior that is not in your best interest, such as contacting an ex or reminiscing too much about the past. Don’t act on your impulses related to the things you’re trying to get over. Get some rest until the impulse passes.
2. Lying. Be honest with yourself and with those in whom you choose to confide as to why the relationship didn’t work out, why you chose to leave or why your partner is now your ex-partner. Being dishonest with yourself or with others can create subtle tension within you that can make you seek to connect with the ex again and misidentify the problems in the relationship such that you minimize the problems or overemphasize the good parts of the ex-partner or relationship. Being honest sets you free from that because it forces you to look at things as they were, and once you resolve and reconcile your feelings about the realities of the relationship and the ex-partner, you are truly free to move on from the past.
3. Trying to move on too quickly. No one wants to be hurt and we certainly don’t want to linger in a sea of emotional pain and distress. To end this suffering, it is tempting to quickly get another partner, have an impulsive encounter with someone or jump into another relationship. While this is a tempting means of ending your pain, it cuts short the time needed to experience your feelings, process those feelings and heal from the feelings and the relationship. Jumping into something new isn’t dealing with your emotional distress, it is simply deferring the pain and transporting the distress into a new relationship and on to a new partner.
4. Little things set you off. When you are easily annoyed, provoked or angered following a break-up, the emotional distress you feel when you lash out may be a sign to you that your feelings are still raw and unresolved, and you may then feel somehow “justified” in giving up on the task of dealing with your emotions and then giving in to the desire to contact the ex-partner or impulsively find someone new. Instead of seeing the signs of your emotions being raw as a trigger to do something impulsive, instead see it as a sign that you need to stick with your commitment of processing and working through your emotional distress.
5. Feeling badly about yourself. It is very easy to view an ended relationship as a failure experience, a failure on your part or yourself as a failure. Any of these perceptions can make you feel badly about yourself and when you experience these feelings strongly or long enough, it puts you in a position to make poor or impulsive choices, which are likely to make you feel even worse after you’ve acted on them. Stick with your commitment to work through the emotional pain. You’ll feel much better about yourself on the other side of the pain.
6. Using alcohol or drugs to deal with your pain. This is a common tactic to deal with emotional pain, but it’s rarely an effective one. Using alcohol or drugs to numb your pain also results in impairing your judgment and decision-making ability, and you can easily wind up doing things and making choices that can land you in even greater trouble and distress later.
7. Giving up too soon. It is sometimes incredibly difficult to function and remain committed to suffering through emotional distress, loneliness and the ache of missing the person or relationship that is no longer part of your life. Such pain, distress and, sometimes panic can cause you to give up your commitment, reach out to the ex-partner or seek out someone new or temporary to help you ease your suffering. While these impulsive acts might distract you from your pain momentarily, that moment passes and you may be left feeling even worse about the choices you made while you were feeling lonely. Stay with your commitment. Once you’ve truly dealt with and gotten past the pain, you don’t have to worry about it coming back and disrupting your life anymore.