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# How To Release Relationship Baggage

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All too often, the weight of your past is carried on to your next relationship. When you bring along these old hurts, it's a sure-fire way to sabotage your new love. The bottom line is that no one should enter into a primary relationship with someone who is still carrying their old baggage—and that includes you!

If you are concerned about your own insecurities or have doubts about going into another relationship, acknowledge yourself for your wisdom. It's time to clean out the baggage that's holding you down. This process will open you up to create the kind of healthy, happy relationship you have been looking for and deserve.

*When Ray found out her husband was having an affair, she was completely devastated. She thought their relationship was sound and loving. She knew she devoted 18 years of her life to being a good wife and mother. However, she did not know what went wrong. Now divorced, she is still trying to get past the pain and trauma of her experience. Since that time, Ray has dated several men. Nevertheless, she's suspicious and untrusting. Ray thinks her apprehensions about her past are sabotaging her new relationships and she's not sure how to break the cycle.*

If you also have unfinished business weighing you down, the following steps can help you complete the process of closure.

### **#1. Identify your feelings about the past**

Your previous relationship may have left you with some unresolved issues and anxiety about your future. Ignoring the situation doesn't work. It always comes back to haunt you. So, it's time to examine your

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relationships to understand how the past is creating chaos in your current romantic life.

What commonly happens is that your doubts and negative emotions trigger irrational thoughts or behaviors within you. These feelings grow, and instead of being able to let them go, you unconsciously repeat the programming in your next relationship. This causes a cycle of unhealthy behaviors that can ruin any potential for peace and harmony. You must come to a place of realization that giving those negative emotions so much power over you is a waste of time and energy.

You want to be able to pinpoint what's troubling you and identify the underlying problem. Identifying the problem is the first step to releasing it. Notice any patterns that are common in all your relationships. While you may not be at fault for some of these patterns, there may be others you are guilty of perpetuating. Be responsible for changing what you can about yourself. At the same time, it is crucial to realize that it is not your responsibility to change anyone else. This is, of course, a lot easier said than done. However, if you keep that insight in mind, it will help you steer clear of playing the old '*change*' game with a partner who has no interest in modifying his basic behavior.

### **#2: Feel so you can heal**

If you feel sad, angry, guilty, bitter, hurt, resentful, or disillusioned, it's best to acknowledge those emotions so you can work on getting past them. Feelings that are suppressed are usually uncovered by some trigger, like a familiar song, a comment, a certain look, a particular

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restaurant or other place, etc. When you identify your emotions and understand them, the triggers that elicit those emotions are no longer charged. In fact, you feel nothing at all, and that neutrality is good, if you want to move on with a new relationship.

### **#3: Let trust build slowly**

Trust means you have faith that your partner will be honest, keep promises and not abandon you. If someone disappointed you in the past, you may feel jaded about trusting anyone new. To help build trust again, ask yourself how long you want to feel self-defeated and angry? Once you realize that these feelings are no longer useful, you are ready to let them go and move on.

It is important to get to know someone slowly, so that you'll see the true person you are involved with. You may start by sharing some small confidences to see what happens. If the confidence is breached, then move on to your next relationship. If not, you can continue sharing larger, more intimate secrets as you begin to feel comfortable that your partner is trustworthy. People are very complex, social creatures, but without trust, you can never really be close to another person. And closeness is something we all crave and need.

### **#4: Acknowledge the lessons as gifts**

Instead of repeating the mistakes you've made over and over again, stop blaming others and begin identifying where you can change. What part did you play in allowing the hurt? Did you lack the confidence to stand up for yourself? Give yourself the opportunity to

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learn from the experience and even forgive yourself for your part. Try also to forgive yourself for your naivety. Could you have done things differently? Perhaps, but you did the best you could at that time. Now you know better, so don't make the same mistake twice. Insight is the gift we get for learning our lessons.

### **#5: Don't have sex too soon**

If you're still having trouble moving beyond the hurt from your past, you may want to delay sexual intimacy with a new partner. Too often it just complicates matters. Any time you plan on having sex with someone, you are making an emotional commitment. If you are not ready for that commitment, you should wait before you become physically intimate. Postpone moving to this new level until it feels right emotionally. Your partner, if he really cares, will be okay waiting until you're ready. How long should you wait? Again, this decision depends on your sense of trust, your ability to release the past, and your sense of self-awareness and respect.

### **#6: Release the past through ceremony**

Obsession over past incidents, painful memories, or hurtful partners is counterproductive and will not lead to a new healthy partnership. It prevents you from seeing your potential partner for his own merit, since he is always being compared to your past negative experience.

You can, however, release your past through a ceremonial ritual. All it takes is a few minutes of your time and a desire to do the work. Start by writing a letter to the person who hurt you. Do not hold anything

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back. After you've written your thoughts, feelings, resentments, and painful memories, put the letter in a fire-proof container and burn it. State out loud that you are releasing all the negative feelings and behaviors from this experience—and really feel it!

This exercise is for you only. It is not meant for anyone else to see. However, it is a wonderful form of release since you get rid of a lot of “history” and allow yourself the freedom to experience more joy, love, peace, and self-respect. Just remember, unless you fill the empty spaces you've just cleared out with good thoughts, all the old garbage will return. Be mindful of what you are telling yourself. Use self-affirming statements and other positive self-talk. Start to believe that you can be happy and deserve a healthy relationship.

### **#7: Get rid of your sense of failure**

Your past relationship(s) may have been in trouble, but it takes two to tango. Let go of your sense of guilt that you could have done more, anger that you were a victim, or self-criticism that you should have known better. Instead, focus on the lessons you may have learned about love and loving. A failed relationship does not make you a failure. Therefore, learn from your past—don't keep reliving it!

### **#8: Seek professional help if you need it**

There are many self-help books on relationships available in bookstores, but if you need more than books can offer, a mental health professional can help you uncover the root of your emotional pain. Even if it is difficult for you to share your feelings with another person,

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it is very important to find a way to talk about your pain so you can heal. Just knowing that someone understands how you feel helps pave the way for clarity and acceptance.

### **#9: Visualize yourself happy in a new relationship**

You know what you don't want in a partner, but it's more important to know what you do want—focus on that. Have a clear mental image of your desired partner and see yourself happy together. Even more important than seeing is feeling how you will feel in this relationship. The more genuine feeling you can produce around what you want, the more you will attract exactly what you are looking for.

*Ray decided she needed to get professional help. Her therapist supported her in understanding her insecurities and how she could rebuild her self-confidence and self-esteem. Ray learned that the energy she put toward her anger and bitterness could also be directed to redesigning who she is. Ray is now back in school finishing her degree in teaching. On the recommendation of her therapist, Ray journals her thoughts daily to keep in touch with any negative emotions she may still be harboring. Ray feels she is ready to start dating again because she is no longer feeling sorry for herself or resentful about her past.*

Releasing old baggage is very liberating. You feel a weight lift off your shoulders setting you free to have a healthy, long-term relationship. The time that you spend working on letting go of the past will make you, and your potential partner, grateful that you took the time to clear your mind, heart and soul to love again.

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### About Amy Sherman

For more than 20 years Amy Sherman has been working in the helping field, inspiring others to live their best life. She founded Baby Boomers' Network as a resource for boomers to transition through midlife using the healthiest, most effective coping skills. As a boomer herself, she is aware of the special issues boomers face and is committed to helping other reinvent themselves and reach their ideal goals.

Amy's newest book, co-authored with her sister, Rosalind Sedacca, CCT, is titled, [99 Things Women Wish They Knew Before Dating After 40, 50 & Yes, 60!](#) This easy-to-read guide is packed with wisdom for women who are moving on and ready to create a loving, lasting and fulfilling relationship in the years ahead. Amy is also the author of the e-book, [Distress-Free Aging: A Boomer's Guide to Creating a Fulfilled and Purposeful Life](#).

To know more about Amy Sherman, visit [www.BummedoutBoomer.com](http://www.BummedoutBoomer.com).

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