

# Judith Ruskay Rabinor, PhD

## DIVORCE & CO-PARENTING EXPERT



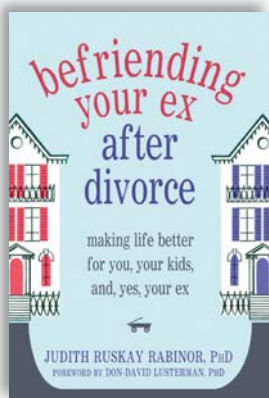
### About Dr. Rabinor

**JUDITH RUSKAY RABINOR, PHD** is a clinical psychologist, author, consultant and psychotherapist with offices in New York City and Lido Beach, Long Island. She has more than three decades of experience working with individuals, couples, groups and families. Judy is frequently a keynote speaker and workshop presenter at national and international conferences, professional associations, retreat centers, universities and schools, including Harvard Medical School of Continuing Education, The Esalen Institute, National Association of Social Work meetings, The Renfrew Center Foundation Conference, The International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals, The New York City Board of Education and numerous university campuses including Princeton University and Barnard College. In addition to a private practice, she runs clinical case focused supervision and consultation groups for therapists and other mental health practitioners.

After obtaining her PhD in 1978, Judy developed a speciality in eating disorders, training at The Center for the Study for Anorexia and Bulimia in New York City. In 1991 she founded the American Eating Disorders Center of Long Island, an out-patient psychotherapy center on Long Island. For two decades she has trained therapists. In 2002 she published *A Starving Madness*. Currently she consults to the Renfrew Center Foundation and is an Instructor and Supervisor at the Center for the Study of Anorexia and Bulimia in New York City.

Now, Judy has turned her attention to her own personal journey. As a pioneer in the joint custody divorce movement, she has written *Befriending Your Ex After Divorce*. Judy's two seemingly different specialities are woven together by her commitment of the power of relationship to heal. She describes her therapeutic approach as eclectic—experiential, relational, spiritual and practical, heavily influenced by The Relational Cultural Therapy of The Stone Center. This theory states that a sense of inner connection— to oneself, others and the universe is the central organizing feature of human life. In her clinical work, she helps people develop a deeper connection to themselves, to others and to everything the universe offers that enhances a sense of aliveness, vitality and joy.

In conjunction with Journey Mexico she conducts writing retreats in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. She lives in New York City and Long Island with her husband, and has two grown children and three grandchildren.



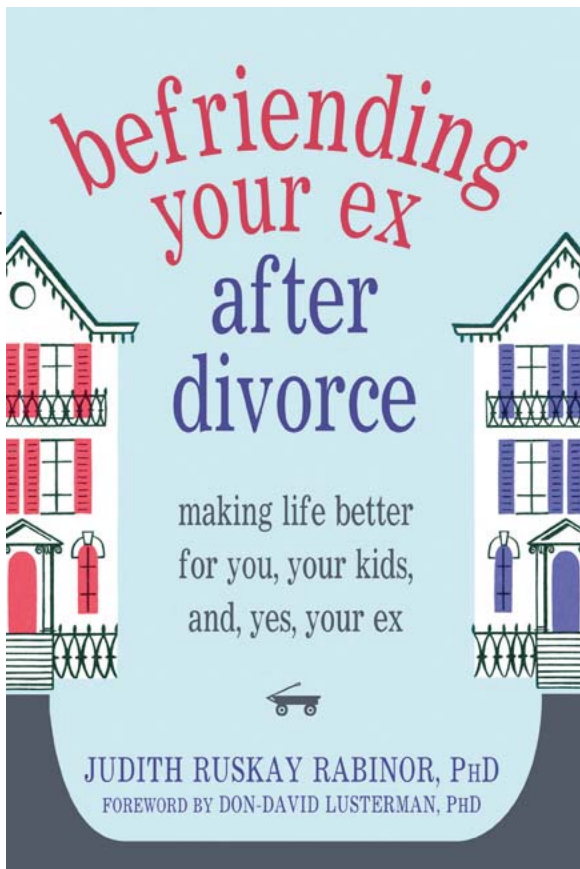
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### **Befriending Your Ex After Divorce**

Making Life Better for You, Your Kids, and, Yes, Your Ex  
Judith Ruskay Rabinor, PhD  
January 2013 / ISBN: 978 1 60882 277 5 / 224 pages / 6 x 9



# Befriending Your Ex After Divorce

JUDITH RUSKAY RABINOR, PHD

## Because Divorce Lasts a Lifetime

About the Book

Divorce is often difficult, but it doesn't have to be messy or traumatic. With a little guidance, you can maintain a healthy, functional relationship with your ex, while also creating a balanced and positive environment for your children.

In *Befriending Your Ex after Divorce*, the author draws on her own experience as a divorced parent as she artfully combines research, clinical practice, and the everyday emotional and practical realities faced by so many divorced families.

This guide is filled with strategies for coping with the anger, grief, and loss that often follow a divorce. By learning to get along and collaboratively co-parent with your ex, together you can be a powerful source of support, not only to your children, but to each other.

### Praise

"Whether you're angry or sad about the breakup, *Befriending Your Ex after Divorce* shows you how to manage your feelings and find healthy new ways to relate to your ex. A valuable guidebook that should be read by everyone who has an ex!"

—Constance R. Ahrons, PhD, author of *The Good Divorce* and *We're Still Family*

"*Befriending Your Ex after Divorce* is a wise, practical, and compassionate guide that will help make your transition easier, happier, and ultimately a pathway to renewal. It is a gateway into forgiveness—which is the key to all lasting change. This is a must-read for anyone going through a divorce with children."

—Barbara Biziou, author of *The Joy of Ritual* and *The Joy of Family Rituals*

"Divorce ends a marriage; it doesn't end a family.... This book teaches separated spouses how to let go of the anger, grief, and resentment that prevents them from getting on with their lives."

—Melinda Blau, author of *Families Apart: Ten Keys to Successful Co-Parenting* and award-winning journalist

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Praise  
(cont.)

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“This is an inspiring book that every divorced parent should have on their night table, and every therapist who works with divorcing families should have it in their office. Judith Ruskay Rabinor offers both a professional and personal model of co-parenting that nurtures emotional connection with oneself, as well as emotional communication with one’s ex. Her work is based on a deep understanding of the importance of maintaining healthy attachment bonds, for the sake of both children and parents, alike.”

—Diana Fosha, PhD, founder and director of the AEDP Institute

“I highly recommend this book to anyone who truly wants to get along with their ex—as well as to those who have no interest in being friends. Every page is full of well-researched information that can help even the most jilted of spouses relate to their ex in a way that holds the best interest of the children as a top priority and promotes healing for everyone involved. It should be mandatory reading for anyone whose marriage is ending.”

—Susan Pease Gadoua, LCSW, author of *Contemplating Divorce* and *Stronger Day by Day*

“One of the hardest things we are called upon to do in life is to open our hearts to someone who hurt or betrayed us. Yet therapists deal every day with the tragic consequences to divorced families when the exes keep feuding and stewing. *Befriending Your Ex after Divorce* helps former partners access the love and compassion they have for each other that is buried beneath the pain. The post-divorce life of families doesn’t have to be barren and bitter. This book can help make it a period of learning and beauty.”

—Richard Schwartz, PhD, founder and director of *Internal Family Systems* and author of *Introduction to Internal Family Systems Therapy* and *You Are the One You’ve Been Waiting For*

“Judith Ruskay Rabinor is a clinical psychologist who has felt the pain of divorce herself and helped hundreds of clients through those trials. If you are facing a painful break-up or have experienced one, or if you simply want to help someone who has, this book is for you. Abraham Lincoln said, ‘Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?’ Now, here is Rabinor’s accumulated wisdom on this topic. She aims at not just helping you minimize pain, but enlisting an ally. You can draw on her wisdom in this book if you want to help make life more peaceful and productive for your children, yourself, and your ex.”

—Everett L. Worthington, Jr., author of *Forgiving and Reconciling*

“In my over 35 years as a practicing divorce attorney at Jenner & Block, I have seen too many divorcing couples act out grudges with their exes in destructive post-divorce conflicts. Much has already been written to minimize these outcomes by explaining the importance of having a good divorce for the sake of the children, and proposing strategies for co-parenting after divorce. Rabinor’s book, however, goes deeper and offers a fresh perspective by focusing on the couple’s personal relationship after divorce.... A groundbreaking perspective, certain to reframe our thinking on post-divorce life.”

—James. H. Feldman, Esq, family law partner and board chair of The Family Institute at Northwestern University

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## Excerpt

### Why Befriend Your Ex?

Here are some common responses from people who think befriending your ex can't work:

- "Why would I want to befriend that womanizer?"
- "After what she did to me?"
- "That liar and thief? I could never trust him again!"

While these things may have been true in the past, befriending your ex is about giving both of you another chance—not for your marriage, but for a new, post-divorce relationship.

### For Your Children

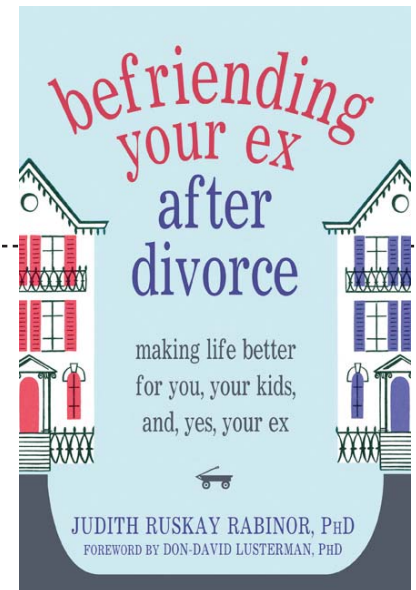
Because you and your ex share children, you have created a bond that is far stronger than anything that could be broken by a signature on a divorce decree. Regardless of your custody agreement, you won't be able to excise your ex from your life forever. That's because your ex is your child's parent forever. One of the most important and consistent research findings regarding the adjustment of children to divorce is that children who have two involved parents adjust to divorce far easier than those who do not. Whether you like it or not, it's best for your children to have an ongoing relationship with both you and your ex. Since you can't get your ex out of your life completely, you might as well develop the most positive relationship you can.

### Avoiding the Trickle-Down Effect

Ranked as one of the top stressors in adult life, divorce is said to bring out the worst in people. Divorce often brings a series of big changes, including moving, adjusting to a new neighborhood and changed schedules, suffering a loss of income, or all of these things. When compared to children from intact families, children in adversarial divorces are at greater risk of experiencing a whole host of future psychological problems: depression, substance abuse, and school failure. Being locked into a hostile or alienated relationship with your ex is arguably the worst stress for your children.

Children absorb parental stress. Being mindful of this trickle-down effect will help you minimize the stress of your divorce on your children. When parents divorce, children are faced with multiple changes and challenges. In addition to possibly having to move, change schools, and make new friends, children often develop acute radar regarding the stability of their environments, especially how dependable their parents will be for them.

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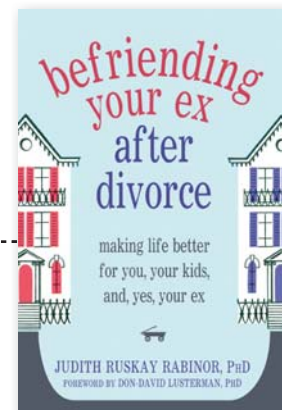
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Excerpt  
(cont.)

## Children Benefit When Parents Cooperate

Arguably the number one predictor of how children of divorced parents fare emotionally and psychologically is the degree to which their parents can cooperate and communicate. Many states mandate that divorcing parents take a “parenting apart” class to learn basic skills to help their children best survive divorce. Paramount among these skills is to avoid making negative comments about the other parent and to avoid using the child as a “messenger” between you and your ex. Befriending your ex is an extension of the cooperative co-parenting that most mental health professionals advise is in the best interest of the children.

Even if you were in a high-conflict marriage, the odds are that if you work at it, you will be able to get along as parents because, regardless of your differences and whether your ex engages in behavior that you consider to be “wrong,” she can still be a parenting partner to you and an effective parent to your children.

Your ex may be a good-enough parent even if he was not a good-enough spouse. Your ex may be willing to collaborate with you on the child-rearing issues that arise today, tomorrow, and in the years to come.

Over and over I have seen that when two former partners can cooperate around the children, over time they forge a friendship that’s good for not only the children but also themselves. You may be able to access feelings of kindness, compassion, and gratitude for the person who is still your parenting partner.

## For Your Own Well-Being

Life is precarious, and having enduring connections with others helps all of us feel more grounded and secure. Even if, right now, you are still soothing the wounds of your divorce, your ex might be able to be a compassionate co-parent and a generous collaborator. Hopefully, your ex is someone whom you once loved and who loved you.

Your ex is someone with whom you share a history, someone who may well represent one of the most enduring relationships of your life. There’s no guarantee that you will re-couple, remarry, or stay remarried, but if you have children, you ex will forever be their parent and thus be in your life forever. You don’t want to worry about a continuing negative relationship with the person with whom you are likely to share many extraordinary moments in your children’s lives, from graduations and marriages to grandparenthood. Remaining enemies with your ex is bad for your mental and physical health. On the other hand, the effort you put into befriending your ex can only add value to your life.

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