

10 Reasons Why Your Spouse Won't Forgive You

You have, you know—wronged your spouse. You've caused your spouse pain, both knowingly and unknowingly. (Now don't try to tell me you've never started to say or do something that wounded your spouse, realized it and thought, *They deserve it. I'm going to do it anyway!*)

Sure, you had your reasons: You didn't know any better, you were protecting yourself, you were responding out of your own past or your own pain, your spouse wasn't meeting your needs or any number of things. But you have hurt your spouse. How do you move forward?

Your spouse is responsible before God for how, when and whether they forgive you. But here are some ways you can make it immeasurably harder for them to do so. (And just to be clear, these are things *not* to do!)

1. You don't ask for forgiveness.

The first and most disarming step you can take is a heartfelt apology, without excuses, and a humble request that they forgive you. When you become aware you have caused your spouse pain, that's the moment to ask for forgiveness. Don't hide behind your own walls and expect your spouse to come offering forgiveness. When you do wrong, humble yourself before your spouse and apologize. Own it.

2. You demand that your spouse forgive you.

God offers you and me forgiveness as a gift. Forgiveness is always a gift; it's not something you can demand. Forgiveness that is demanded is not forgiveness. Your spouse may say "I forgive you" under duress, but that only leads to higher walls and a closed heart. The only possibility of a restored

relationship is to allow your spouse to offer the gift of forgiveness as and when they choose.

3. You minimize the pain you caused your spouse.

It's likely your spouse will need to express their hurt in various ways. You may not understand how they could feel as hurt as they do, or believe they should be "over it" already. Your spouse hurts as bad as they hurt. You can greatly facilitate healing your relationship by allowing your spouse to express their hurt as often as they need to, even though doing so is terribly uncomfortable for you.

4. You try to control your spouse's forgiveness process.

Trying to tell your spouse how and when to forgive you only adds to their pain. Your spouse may need some prolonged private time with God. They may need to talk about their hurt with you. They may need to talk about it with someone else. Even after extending you their forgiveness, they may have healing to do. It takes as long as it takes, and you can't control their process.

5. You make excuses for your bad behavior.

Any apology followed by a "but" is not a true apology. The point is not how tired you were, what you learned as a child, who else treated you badly, what you thought was going on, what your spouse did or didn't do, or anything else. Understanding those things may help you learn how not to repeat the hurtful behavior in the future, but an apology is not the time for rationalization. Even if you were only 1 percent at "fault", you need to apologize for the pain you caused without excuses.

6. You point out your spouse's shortcomings.

"But you hurt me first" wipes out any benefit of your apology. It's just another excuse. While your spouse may well have hurt

you also, this is the time to focus on how you caused your spouse pain. And this goes for when your spouse needs to talk about their hurt feelings again. The spotlight can be turned the other direction another time (see next week's article). For now, the pain you caused your spouse is what matters.

7. You pretend everything is OK.

The wound(s) you've caused your spouse don't immediately go away simply because you apologize and they say, "I forgive you." The bank account is still smaller (or empty). Friends still heard the negative things you said about your spouse. Your spouse still knows of your unfaithfulness. Their heart still hears the hurtful things you said. The consequences of your behavior may take time to deal with, sometimes a lot of time.

8. You refuse to engage in rebuilding trust.

Getting wounded destroys your spouse's ability to trust you, to either a small or large degree. The deeper the wound, the longer and harder it will be to rebuild trust. Again, it takes as long as it takes. Your role is to understand what "trustworthy" means to your spouse, and to do what it takes to live up to that—over and over and over again.

9. You use Scripture as a weapon.

Few things will turn your spouse off faster, raise their defenses and hamper their forgiveness process more than you wielding Scripture as a weapon over them. Telling your spouse "the Bible says you're supposed to forgive me" means you've got something else to apologize for—and change.

10. You refuse to change your behavior.

Even if your spouse says "I forgive you," what your relationship looks like in the future will depend on your actions going forward more than your words. *You must change*

the behavior that wounded your spouse. It doesn't matter whether you think it's fair or not. You won't do it perfectly, but your spouse will need to see you changing. And this is where you need God's forgiveness and transforming power more than anything else.

Does this sound impossible? Humanly speaking, it is. That's why the only ones who can truly receive or offer forgiveness are those who have embraced the overwhelming gift of God's forgiveness of them.

Your turn: *How have you made it harder for your spouse to forgive you for the hurts you've caused? What are you going to do about it? Leave a comment below. {eo}*

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