

How to turn any enemy into a friend

GLAMOUR

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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Cut the enemy smack-talk, says one expert; it's unhelpful to harbor negativity
- If pesky in-laws are at play, start new family traditions but include them
- When it comes to managing exes, it's important to create boundaries, not hostility

(Glamour.com) -- Let's be honest: There are just certain [people we love to hate](#) -- our bitchy boss, our monster-in-law, our boyfriend's unfairly fit former flame. But rather than harbor ill will, what if you could flip those relationships from bad to better? It's possible, and we're here to tell you how.

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Enemy #1: Your boss

Whether she shames you in group meetings or denies your vacation requests, you've got a nagging feeling your superior finds you inferior. The first step toward friendship, experts say, is to suppress your impulse to smack-talk. "You've probably been venting to whomever will listen to you about this boss for so long that you don't realize how much of your life you expend on negativity," says April Masini, relationship expert and author of "Think & Date Like a Man." Instead, "start doing nice things, as if there's a Secret Santa competition happening and you've pulled your boss' name from the hat. Bring coffee, offer to read over something for her, stay late at work or ask her if she'd like to have lunch."

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Enemy #2: Your mother-in-law

She may have raised the man of your dreams, but you seriously wonder how they could possibly share the same DNA. If you have to endure yet another hellish flight to the middle of nowhere to spend the holidays eating her terrible food, you'll scream. Your move: Start new family traditions -- but include her in them. "For example, if Thanksgiving has always been held at her home and you'd like to host this year, talk to your husband first and your mother-in-law second," says Masini. Getting him on the same page as you beforehand is essential. Next, "Tell her what you're considering and ask her to think about it for a week or two," says Masini. Chances are, if you're up front about the request, you include her in the plans, you give her time to think and she sees that your husband is on your team, she'll come around.

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Enemy #3: Your ex

Even though you've split, he's still around. He shares your friends, the neighborhood bar or even the same apartment. If you find yourself tense and testy around him (or on the receiving end of such treatment) take a deep breath and try this instead: "Compliment him when you can, without sending the wrong message," Masini says. "You can tell him that you really liked a particular thing about him -- the way he was so good with your friends' kids, or the respectful way he treated his parents. He may have a preconceived template for treating an ex [bashing you = distancing himself from you], but if you don't play along and show him a better way, you may just win him over."

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Enemy #4: Your boyfriend's ex (you know, the one who just won't go away)

"In a perfect world, your current flame's ex would move to Alaska," says psychologist Lauren Napolitano. Amen to that! But, alas, we don't live in a perfect world. And she doesn't live in Alaska. The key to a friendly relationship with her is an open conversation with him. "If he has a balanced and appropriately detached relationship with her, you'll likely feel warmly toward her," says Napolitano. In that case, it's good to be friendly when you see her in a group setting. "If, on the other hand, your flame struggles with flirting with her, you may grow hostile toward her," Napolitano says. In this case, you're right to have some comments about the situation (but not right to be hostile!) Openly -- and calmly -- discuss any concerns you have, and establish expected boundaries right at the beginning of your relationship. He'll either assuage your concerns, or continue his flirtatious behavior. Either way, you'll have your answer.

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Enemy #5: Your (un-neighborly) neighbor

You wouldn't borrow sugar from this guy if he had the last stash on earth. Maybe he's the guy who plays loud music 24/7, or maybe he's

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the guy who bangs on the wall even when your TV volume is barely audible even to you. Either way, explains Napolitano, "When someone criticizes your gardening, your noise level or even your mailbox, you become annoyed with this person. Some neighbors just can't help but express their opinions about everything, and these are the neighbors for which the adage 'good fences make good neighbors' was born." What to do: Acknowledge your differences -- then force yourself to offer appreciation for something he does, even if it's not how you'd do it. "For example, if you disagree on how tidy to keep a front lawn, tell your neighbor that you really appreciate how tidy he keeps things, and that when your work load lets up, you'll have more time to emulate his style," says Masini.

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