

Red Flags in Relationships

Many people are caught off guard when their relationships end. It seems as if everything is going fine one day, and the next day a conversation happens, a door slams, and it's over. But in actuality very few relationships deteriorate and end this quickly. The vast majority shows signs of decline long before the breakup, and if you're aware of these, you'll be better prepared for the end of your relationship. These signs are **RED FLAGS**.

Red Flag # 1: The Relationship Is Out of Balance

If you're currently in a relationship, you may think the difference between how you treat your partner and how your partner treats you due to a difference in your personalities. This could be, but don't ignore the possibility that one of you simply doesn't care as much.

It is difficult to admit that you may care more for the other person than he or she cares for you. But it is true, and you know it's true, don't deny it. Denying it will only cause more pain in the end.

Your relationship may be out of balance if you or your partner:

- Initiates most of the contact for the relationship
- Initiates most of the affectionate advances such as holding hands, hugs and kisses
- Is always the one who makes plans, while the other just seems to go along.
- Sacrifices to do things for the other, but the sacrifices are not reciprocated.
- Is excited about the relationship, while the other person seems merely to be along for the ride.
- Receives a less-than-enthusiastic response when talking about future plans for the relationship.

Red Flag # 2: One of You Is a Rescuer

When someone is always rescuing another person, the person being rescued begins to learn that she does not need to change because her partner is always there to bail her out. And even though motives of the rescuer may be noble, in time the message he sends is, "I'm better than you are, and you're not capable of handling yourself." Eventually the person being rescued begins to resent the rescuer.

Red Flag # 3: Your Relationship Is on Possibilities, Not Reality

Think back to the beginning of your relationship. Do you remember thinking your partner wasn't what you wanted to be, or what you had hoped for, yet you found yourself thinking, *He has so much potential!*

- Perhaps he wasn't what you were looking for spiritually, but you thought, *The Lord could really do wonders with him!*
- Perhaps he seemed apathetic, but you thought, well, he is just willing for the right opportunity to come along.

- Perhaps your partner's emotional outbursts were disturbing, but you thought, *I'll be able to help him get a handle on that anger and depression eventually.*
- Perhaps you thought the way your partner eyed the opposite sex was just because you and he were not committed or married yet. You thought, *once that happens, he'll only have eyes for me.*
- Perhaps the way he handled his finances was bit scary, especially with all those credit cards maxed out. But you thought, *I'm sure he'll learn responsibility once we're married.*

If you've built your relationship on all these possibilities, the problem was *not* the other person. You know who the problem was. **Expecting to change another person fundamentally is as silly as expecting gold from a lead mine.**

Red Flag # 4: One of You Is a Perfectionist

A perfectionist has trouble finding an acceptable marriage partner and has difficulty forming relationships that leads to marriage. Perfectionists want perfect mates, not human one. Sometimes they reject potential partners often delaying marriage for years.

Those who don't allow their partners to get to know them, tend to retreat and live behind closed emotional doors. They are afraid they'll be found lacking in some way.

Red Flag # 5: One of You Is a Controller

Their use of control is part of their survival system. They believe that the "best defense is an offense," and the offensive strategy they employ is that of staying in control.

Controllers use variety of methods to get their partners to do what they want. Both controllers and perfectionists use absolutes such as *always* and *never*. They use phrases like "If it weren't you ... " or "Because of you I ... ". These are *blame* and *shame* statements.

Controllers are clever. They often *shift the blame* to get their point across. In this way they don't have to shoulder any responsibility themselves.

Red Flag # 6: One or Both of You Is Consumed with Anger

If a person always has a tendency to be angry, a relationship will bring out this tendency even more. In fact, a relationship can become a sort of factory for production of anger.

Red Flag # 7: The Attraction Turns Sour

Fatal attractions occur over a period of time because people naturally show only their best side at the beginning of relationship. In addition, when people are "falling in love", they tend to see what they want to see and ignore the negatives.

Avoiding Fatal Attractions: Ask yourself, “What do I need for a lifelong commitment?” “What will I not tolerate?” These are important questions to consider before a relationship develops.

Red Flag # 8: One of You Is a Pursuer

Pursuers relentlessly “chase after” their partners. If the woman of a couple is a pursuer, she doesn’t take “no” or “I don’t know” for an answer. When a pursuer is rejected, his or her impulse is to pursue harder.

If a man is a pursuer, he usually gives too many cards, gifts, or compliments. He talks too soon about marriages and children. Sometimes this sort of pursuit borders on over-possessiveness.

Pursuers have fear of rejection and abandonment.

Red Flag # 9: One of You Is a Distancer

The cry of the distancer is, “Give me freedom and don’t fence me in.” Most distancers don’t make demands and don’t want any made of them. To keep getting close, distancers stop relationships before they start. Often distancers lash out to hurt their partners before their partners lash out to hurt their partners, before their partners can hurt them.

Intimacy is the glue that holds relationship together, but distancers are afraid of intimacy. They protect themselves against it and use variety of means to keep others at arms length.

Distancers set limits on their time, availability and on how much they participate in the world of their partners. Please understand if you’re with a distancer, he or she resists talking about his or her own interests.

Red Flag # 10: The Man of the Couple Is a “Vanishing Man”

Vanishing men cannot handle the intimacy that is necessary for a healthy relationship. They may come on strong and give you the impression that they are capable of kind relationship you want, but then “poof”, they vanish. Vanishing men are usually not there when you need them and only want to do what they want to do. If you see this pattern, beware. The following are the characteristics of a vanishing man:

- He tries to make you feel guilty or ridiculous for wanting more in a relationship than he’s giving.
- He wants to be cheerful regardless of what he does even if he makes no contacts with you for weeks.
- When he does enter your life again, he expects you to pick-up right where he left off.
- He doesn’t do what he says he’ll do.
- He has little or no empathy for you when you’re hurt or upset over his responses.

- He is on guard when you probe for his feelings and get into relationship discussions.
- Your Birthday? Forget it. He does, and may mention it two weeks later.
- If you're interested in someone else, he comes on strong, but expects you to accept his dating others.

If your partner is a vanishing man, *let him vanish*.

Remember there are some men who are like butterfly. If you chase them, you'll never catch them, but if you stand still, one might come and sit next to you.

Red Flag # 11: One of You Has a Habit of Saying, "I Love You, But ..."

When you become involved with someone who spouts this line, get out! Run! It's an exercise in futility.

Some people cannot bring themselves to say those important three words, "I love you". Some fake it by mumbling or making a joke of it. Others use substitute phrases such as, "Now I really do like you a lot," or "I really care for you," or "I think the world of you."

The following are the few examples of : "*I love you, but ...* ":

- "I love you, but I need more time."
 - I can't live with you."
 - we're too different."
 - you're too good for me."
 - I love (some name of an opposite sex) more."
 - it would never work out."
 - I have to marry someone else."
 - I need to work things out."
 - I need to be alone."
 - My career isn't far enough along."

The above statements mean nothing more than: "I love you, but I'm not in *love* with you."

When Is It Time to Break Up?

You don't have to hate or even dislike a person for it to be necessary to break up. If the relationship isn't beneficial for you, it's not for the other person either, regardless of what he or she says.

Your relationship needs to be cut off when:

- a) You want out more than what you want in, or
- b) Both of you want out and neither of you want to work on continuing the relationship.

Sometimes a couple will say, “We still see each other as ‘friends’ because we enjoy each other’s company.” Why this question? This keeps you from investing time and energy in recovering and then finding someone who could be your lifelong companion.

When is it best to break off a relationship?

As soon as you know it’s not going to work out. You need to listen to your heart, your thoughts and the God’s guidance. Trust yourself. Parts of the relationship may be positive, but are these strong enough to carry the rest of it? Once you know it’s not going to work out, the time you spend waiting is wasted because it delays your recovery and thus the development of a new relationship. Watch out for immobilising statements that will keep you trapped. They could be as follows:

- “I just hate hurting another person.”
- “What will everyone think.”
- “What if he gets really angry with me? I can’t handle that.”
- “It’s just too difficult.”

Every time you make such statements, you begin to believe it even more, and it becomes more difficult to do what needs to be done.

How do you feel when you know a relationship is “right”?

- When it makes you feel alive and optimistic for your future together.
- When it brightens your sensitivity and enjoyment of even most common experience.

If you no longer look forward of seeing her, if you no longer laugh at his jokes, if she irritates you, if he bores you, then you are in trouble.

Do not make the mistake of staying with an unsatisfactory relationship out of sense of guilt. Many woman are prone to staying with a mean and angry man whom they are “not sure about” even after a lot of time together. Forget about it! “But I love him” is no reason to stay with a louse.

You know when you are in love and when this ain’t it, dump the schlump. Don’t stay in an unhappy relationship because you are afraid of hurting his feelings, or worse because you fear nothing better will come along. And stop trying to be a Messiah with every guy. Some men are beyond redemption. You are entitled to happiness, so drop the suffering servant posture. If you deny your essential need to feel loved and appreciated for too long, you will either die on the inside or explode on the outside. That is unfair to both of you. By being honest and ending the relationship you will free yourself and your partner to go and find new dates who are more suitable. You will both be happier.

J Ravikumar Stephen
Chief Facilitating Officer – FABLAR
Madras, India – 600 059
Mailto: fablar123@msn.com