

The Love Doctor®



SIGNS OF RELATIONSHIP TROUBLE

By Dr. Terri Orbuch

Every relationship has its ups and downs and no relationship is perfect. There are certain circumstances, like emotional or physical abuse, where we would all agree that a person is in an unhealthy relationship. But in other instances, how long does a relationship have to be down, or how down does it have to get, before it is considered an unhealthy relationship? This is a difficult question that many people struggle with answering.

Many people don't listen to their gut

feelings about a relationship or fear that they can't or won't be able to identify the "unhealthy habits" they have with their partner. How do you know if a relationship is unhealthy for you? Here are some signs that your relationship is in trouble or unhealthy:

- 1. Full of anger and conflict.** As you think about your relationship or home life together, would you describe it as generally cold, angry and conflicted? Ask yourself whether you and your partner say mean or cruel remarks about each other in front of your children, family or friends and whether the comments have gotten worse over time.

Studies show that in an unhealthy relationship, the negative feelings or experiences outweigh the positive ones. This doesn't mean that you can't experience any negatives or complaints. But picture a scale and pretend you are weighing the daily interactions that make up your relationship. Put the positive experiences on one end of the scale, and the negative issues or troubles on the other side. If you want a healthy relationship, the positive side needs to weigh a lot more.



2. **Lack of partner support.**

Another way of identifying who you feel emotionally close to is by asking yourself whom you would turn to for assistance and help in a stressful situation. If you had a medical scare, a career change or lost your job, would you want support from just about anyone but your partner? Studies show that an unhealthy relationship is one where you would prefer to get help from anyone but your partner. In contrast, healthy couples say that their partner is "there when they need them!"

3. Don't go home. Sometimes people have to work late or have many commitments outside the home. However, when you are working late or increasing your obligations outside the home because you don't want to be with your partner, you are in an unhealthy relationship.

4. Can't say I love you anymore. There are times where you may not like what your partner has done or said. You may not even want to say, "I love you" loud and clear. But, in the end, an unhealthy relationship is one where you can't say the words to your partner anymore at any time.

One or two of these signs on their own may not mean you should leave your relationship. Instead, it indicates that your relationship has serious issues that need attention. Talk to

your partner, and consult a therapist or religious counselor. It can be beneficial to get a third person's perspective to help you sort the issues out.

Also, remember that there are several reasons why people stay in a relationship. Some people stay because they are happy, and they love their partner. These people maintain the relationship because they want to. Others think they should stay because they feel a moral or religious obligation. Still others remain because they feel they have to. They are worried about what might happen if they leave. They stay to avoid the effects on children or the financial and social (reactions of friends and family) costs of ending the relationship. If your relationship has serious issues that don't get resolved and you choose to stay, it is important to understand your reasoning.



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