

## When Relationships Fall Apart



You may not be  
pushing me away  
but you're not  
fighting to keep  
me either.

Sometimes no matter how hard we try relationships do not work. Good people are not good for each other. Sadly enough people who have lost each other usually feel terrible about hurting the other and saddened at their own feelings of failure. Because there is so little support out there to comfort them, they are often reluctant to talk about what happened. Many feel overwhelmed to just give up. The fact is, that many relationships should end. That is especially true when both people have done all they can, aren't even sure why things went wrong, and are weary of trying. Sure, there may also be difficult people who just can't get along with others for any length of time, run when intimacy deepens, or just prefer multiple relationships for their own reasons. But, for the most part, in every new relationship we want to please each other, to deepen their connection, and to overcome their barriers. When they've tried everything they can, and the relationship still doesn't work, it should not be about fault, shame, blame, or fear of trying again. There are some real and justifiable reasons why good people cannot seem to get past their relationship difficulties, no matter how much energy and time they have devoted to each other. If they've done their best and end in appreciation of the other's efforts, they need not to linger in the grief of failure, but to use what they've given each other to form a better foundation for the next time around. If well-intentioned and caring people can, without guilt or blame, recognize the symptoms that tell them that they need to let go, they can end their relationship without resentment or feelings of wasted time. If couples stay too long in a relationship that can't get better, they risk losing the opportunity to cherish the lessons they have learned together. Here are the ten most common symptoms that herald a relationship that is likely to end:

- 1) **Small Irritations that Grate over Time** Every new relationship has both good interactions and not-so-good ones. In new relationships we do our best to appreciate the naturally satisfying connections and ignore those that are irritating. Unfortunately, over time, some of the distressful behaviors begin to fester and are harder for the other person to ignore. They can be little things like leaving clothes on the floor, being chronically late, or forgetting a promise. Sometimes the issues are more serious. When the good connections are eroded by accumulated resentments, the relationship's balance shifts in the wrong direction, and the good that once kept the partnership intact becomes buried under layers of disappointment and disillusionment.
- 2) **Unacceptable Behaviors that were not revealed at the Beginning of the Relationship.** In most new relationships we purposefully hide past behaviors that have negatively affected other relationships. We hope that, once the new relationship is established, the new person will be more likely to forgive those old transgressions. No matter how tolerant a new person may be, there are also certain late confessions that can destroy even the most desirable of relationships as they challenge trust and credibility.
- 3) **Mutually Exclusive Important Needs** When caring people are first together, they accent the ways they can love each other, make allowances for differences, and try to push away as-yet-unrevealed needs in hopes that the deepening love between them will ultimately resolve the situation.

Sadly, some people find over time that they cannot live with certain crucially important different

needs or desires.4) Diminishing illusions.It is totally normal for the exaggerated illusions at the beginning of a relationship to diminish over time the people grow to know each other more deeply. What is considered highly desirable at the beginning may have a negative downside that isn't revealed until the relationship matures. Many times a person dedicated to his or her mission in life may seem marvelously impressive, but then disappoints the other by too often prioritizing that commitment over the Relationship.5) External StressorsThe synergistic energy of a new relationship appears boundless. The connection makes more than the sum of the parts. Abundant in the energy to face challenge, we feel we can face any crisis, unexpected or anticipated.Unfortunately, resources are not endless and too many stressors can erode the deepest of commitments. Major illnesses, accidents, work demands, loss of financial stability, family needs, grief over loss, or a series of uncontrollable disappointments can wear away at our ability to cope. If those stressors continue, we may lose faith in the relationship's capacity to survive them.Stressors stretch our capacity to learn and grow. If we cannot triumph over them, we run the risk of finding each other inadequate. Finding fault with each other's reactions and responses, we will begin to lose trust and separate to solve our problems alone. Sometimes there is just too much heartache, and any relationship can go down when too much is too much.6) Power StrugglesWhen a relationship is new, both people are willing to compromise. We make decisions together, securing each other's opinions and striving for agreement. Sharing the power to make decisions, we become an integrated team creating mutually-agreed-upon solutions.As the relationship matures, one or the other person may express his or her desires, biases, and prejudices with more intensity. Too often, this process results in reciprocal defensiveness when both persons may resort to defending our positions and trying to pressure the other into complying.Power struggles can result in partners just walking away, ranting in anger, creating desperate pleas, or using guilt as a weapon.7) Becoming superficialIt is hard for anyone to be totally authentic and open in a new relationship. Keeping things light, surface, and non-threatening is more common behavior. But, as love grows, people in successful relationships begin to deepen their communication and take more risks in sharing their vulnerabilities and flaws. They are willing to be known in more vulnerable ways and to listen more deeply to each other. That richness of depth in communication and sharing becomes the signature of love.It is all too common and terribly sad when people cannot go beyond superficial interactions. Without the courage or capability to allow their core selves to connect, the relationship will fall prey to shallow connections over time.Over time, the interactions become predictable rituals, requiring less and less effort. To others, they may appear to be totally compatible, but they are really just repeating known and secure habitual behaviors. In time they will become susceptible to new and more intriguing experiences.8) BoredomConstant discovery of the other person's internal and external transformations is the foundation of long-lasting, deepening relationships. Because people in new relationships are usually "more than enough" to satisfy each other, they often don't realize that their own independent growth is a necessary requirement for staying in love.If each person in the relationship has made every effort to know one another deeply and comes to the end of that discovery, they will begin to take each other for granted and put less energy into a dull and habitual relationship. Taking the position of "aren't I good enough as I am," or "You knew who I was when we met and it was okay then, wasn't it?" are rationales that cover the lack of interest in continuous growth.Very

often one person moves ahead in his or her evolution and the other steadfastly stays the same. If no amount of requests, pleading, or threatening changes that pattern, the person who was once enthralled will feel trapped and needs to move on.

9) Self-Serving Escapes that Become More Important than the Primary Relationship

Addictions are the most notable examples. Addictive behaviors are simply compulsive, urgent indulgences that take one person away from the other and cause long-term damage to an intimate relationship. Whether drugs and alcohol, social engagements, involvement in sports or body fitness, or excessive work commitments, they are competing relationships that take precedent over the primary one, and drain its energy. The triangles between two committed people when one is addicted to something, or someone, else will always diminish the unique bond between them. Whenever something or someone becomes more important to one partner than to the other, the relationship will be threatened. Any escape that competes, diminishes, or threatens a relationship should be fair play for exploration and repair. Remember, the common resources of a relationship can only be distributed by mutual agreement if the partnership is important to both. One person cannot unilaterally decide to use those resources without the permission of the other without destroying the sanctity of that agreement.

10) Escalating Misunderstandings and Misassumptions

Many people in maturing relationships forget how to listen carefully without jumping to conclusions, especially with regard to what the other person is actually feeling or thinking. They believe that familiarity has entitled them to thinking they know everything they need to about the other, even if one or the other has changed. Life's challenges can steal people's energy away from their relationship and put its exploration on a back burner. Very often over time, the partners believe they no longer have to make an effort to renew their interest in new priorities. They continue making assumptions based on old or incorrect data, and miss crucial changes and meanings that could alter their responses. Soon, the communication consists of laconic phrases and inaccurate assumptions. They lose interest in each other and fail to resolve misunderstandings. As these destructive interactions multiply, they may no longer try to untangle the mess and let the layers of ignored emotional debris accumulate.