

TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

Identify It | Work With It | Leave It

1. Lack of communication

Communication is riddled with talking in circles and never reaching any solutions. There seems to be an avoidance of dealing with issues at hand. Blaming is often a feature in this communication.

2. Defensiveness

Your partner is often on the defensive when you bring up issues or concerns to address. He or she is deflecting responsibility, giving all kinds of reasons for their behavior or simply denying any role in the issue.

3. Negative Feedback

Your partner is pointing out all the problems with you, withdraws, ignores, belittles or becomes critical of you...leading to negative self image.

4. Lack of Safety

You often feel "unsafe" in this relationship. Emotionally, Psychologically or physically, your body warns you to not share, or put yourself in a vulnerable position. Your body

contracts, you lose your voice, you avoid contact, etc.

5. Dismissing

The feedback in this relationship is that you are the problem. There is little or no encouragement or support of your needs and interests. This leads to negative and declining self image. You are often told that you are the one responsible for the problems in the relationship.

6. You Need to Change

Your partner focuses on your flaws and often demands that you change as opposed to having a healthy tolerance of your flaws and encouraging growth

7. Restricting Relationships

Your partner demands or limits your interaction in relationships outside the partnership. He or she may do this directly or in passive aggressive ways, ie. withdraws, becomes ill, expresses abandonment, etc.



1. When raising an issue with your partner it's important to recognize his or her triggers and to pay attention to the manner in which you approach them Is there anything in your manner, your words, the implications, the room for interpretation....that could cause your partner to become defensive. If they can interpret your behavior as attacking, then they will automatically go into the defense. If you know this is not the case....then here is what there is to do. Try these approaches to determine if there is any possibility for change.

8. Hung Up On Ex

Your partner focuses on your past relationships, it seems to be their obsession. He or she wants more and more details and it feels unhealthy and invasive. They feel threatened.

9. Risking Behavior

Your partner is engaged in risk taking behavior. He or she puts you and or your family at risk in engaging in illegal activity and will not change his or her ways to have you feel safe in the relationship.

1. Ask your partner to answer one question at a time. If they bring up another issue that has you feel like you are chasing them in the conversation, or has you feel defensive, go back to the originating question.
2. Ask your partner if there is anything the two of you can do to create emotional safety in the conversation, perhaps seeing the conversation as not a place to blame one another, but simply to look for the places the both of you get stuck
3. You simply do not want to engage in this kind of conversation. If he or she is not able to accept reason, that withdrawing, belittling, and criticism do not create safety in relationship and conversation, then you want to walk away from the behaviour, letting your partner that you will come back when things have settled down.
4. This is your body's way of letting you know that you do not feel safe in the presence of this person. This is a huge red flag. Again, if your partner is not willing to work with you to create safety, then you need to create that safety on your own, and it's unlikely that it will occur while with your partner.
5. Both partners are responsible for their part in any relationship. If your partner is unwilling to accept that mere fact, then there is very little work that can be done in this relationship. If he or she is, then safety needs to be created in conversation....make a list of ground rules that keep both of you safe in the conversation.
6. A partner who does this is deflecting the light off their flaws. Their flaws seem unbearably ugly and unsafe to look at, so they focus on you. If your partner is willing to accept that flaws are places of growth and not criticism, great. If not, put yourself out of harm's way.
7. This is a classic indication of insecurity and controlling behavior. We all need relationships of all kinds, work, family, friends, mentors.....in order to grow and be supported in life. This is an absolute "no". If you find yourself in this position, seek professional help.
8. Your partner is inserting themselves into your personal space that is off limits. It feels invasive and unhealthy. Ask your partner instead, what would have them feel safe that you love

them for who they are.

9. This boundary is also off limits. No healthy partner would put their loved ones at risk for their own benefit. If your partner will not refrain from this behavior, then he or she is telling you that you and/or your family's safety is not a priority in their world.

All relationships, as they move deeper and deeper into the world of Intimacy (Into Me You See), become challenging. When we have had healthy modeling in our childhood, then we are able to negotiate between the threat of being vulnerable and the needs of our partner. If our past experience has been one where we have been silenced, violated, dismissed, abused, neglected....in essence, have not had consistent (40% or more) feedback that we and our needs are valued, then we do not have the template to see the other as a separate being that have their own needs, and their purpose is not to serve "my" needs to the detriment of theirs.

As children we see these giant caregiver as people who are there to serve our needs. If that was not the case, then we are in constant search of another to compensate. If we are healthy and strong enough, then we can do some of our own healing while in relationship. But if not, then we will only be able to see the "other" as either denying "my" needs or serving them. It's a young place, a young developmental stage, that this person is stuck.

But he or she is responsible for healing, it is not yours to rescue. In fact "not rescuing" allows the other to come to the realization that they can do the healing. Rescuing implies that they cannot.

It is a fine line at times when embroiled in a toxic relationship.....to determine whether healing can be done, or when it is time to leave. Look at the years in which you have been involved, has anything changed or shifted for the better, has your partner taken "any" responsibility for their behavior (and that means doing something about it), are they willing to stick through a plan of action til the end.

Finally, get help. From friends, family, support people and groups, help lines.....whatever it takes to take your out of the relationship, just long enough for you to get perspective, on an ongoing basis.

All the best,

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