

20 signs that you should end it.

Has your relationship run its course? Here's how to tell.

Relationships, like hot summers, often look better from a distance. Just as you forget how draining a muggy day can feel, you also forget how soul-destroying and lonely a relationship can feel when it's not going well.

“So just end it,” right? It's never as simple as that. Most of us have experienced that dilemma of not knowing whether to walk away from a relationship. You think that you're being too picky, you worry that no-one else will love you this much, you don't want to hurt someone you care about, you fear regretting it and not being able to win them back. You've stayed in relationships for those reasons, right? Yep, so have we.

But these alone aren't good enough reasons to stay in a relationship that isn't working. Ending a relationship can be heartbreaking, even if you're dying to get away. The blissful future that you'd imagined when you first got together is now not going to happen. Thing is, is you're unhappy, that blissful future wasn't going to happen anyway.

If you're experiencing a few of these 20 signs regularly, it may be time to move on. It will be difficult, but ultimately it'll be the right thing for you both. Life is too short (and your partner's life is too short) to waste valuable years on a pairing that's going nowhere.

1. You're always craving time alone.

It'd be weird and needy to want your partner by your side every minute of every day. It's normal to look forward to some time alone. But if you're craving me-time and wish that he or she wasn't around, it's clear that your relationship is giving you more frustration than joy.

2. You don't go out together any more.

Even if you're living together, you should never stop going on dates together. A successful relationship is based on more than sex and silently watching the telly together.

3. You prefer seeing your friends to seeing your partner.

A good relationship involves socialising with and without your other half. Not wishing that you lived with your housemates again rather than your lover.

4. You've stopped having sex.

Sex drive can dip for many reasons, including stress or medication. But if you just stop fancying your partner, and sex becomes a chore or stops altogether, listen to your alarm bells.

5. You've stopped touching each other.

Touching isn't just about sex, it's about affection and togetherness. Casual touching, hugging and holding hands are the signs of a healthy relationship with two people who still fancy each other. If you flinch when he or she brushes against you, it really is time to get out.

6. You've stopped kissing.

Passionate kissing is emotionally more intimate than sex, so it's often the first thing to go when two people start drifting apart. If you want to kiss each other but just haven't got round to it for a while, pucker up. If you don't enjoy it, see above.

7. They no longer make you laugh.

Their witty lines once made tea come out of your nose. These days you just wish they'd shut up. Why are you still with them, pray tell?

8. You don't chat.

Chatting – about trivia, what's in the news or what happened at work – is the bedrock of a good relationship. When you stop talking to each other about the little things, it's a sign that you don't see each other as friends any more.

9. You're always nit-picking.

If you're constantly bothered by their coffee-slurping, their taste in pants and everything they do, you're not in love, you're in a constant state of "argh". That's not trivial: it's the kind of everyday stress that can damage your health.

10. They're always nit-picking.

If your partner seems constantly irritated by you, it suggests that they're not happy or even comfortable around you. They may be wanting out, but haven't the courage to bring up the subject. If he or she makes you feel that you can't do anything right, do you really want to be around this person?

11. You do all the chores.

Every long-term couple has disagreements about housework and other chores, but the squabbles usually end in vague equality or compromise. If your partner treats you like a doormat, show them the door.

12. You don't care about your appearance.

Love doesn't mean letting yourself go. If you no longer care about whether he or she fancies you or not, it spells trouble for your sex life – and your relationship.

13. Red letter days are forgotten.

Anniversaries, Valentine's Day and so on may seem trivial, but a loving couple will acknowledge them in some way, even if it's with a scribbled note saying "V-Day is rubbish, let's spend it in bed." Once you forget each other's birthdays, your relationship is so far past its sell-by date that even a dog wouldn't eat it.

14. You're doing all the giving (or all the getting).

Most relationships go through stages where one person is more emotionally and sexually generous than the other, but the imbalance should not be more or less permanent. Parasites don't make good partners.

15. You've stopped liking yourself.

A lover is not supposed to make you feel unloved, unattractive and unable to be

yourself. If yours does, get out and stop letting them sap your spirit.

16. Your friends think they're bad for you.

Your friends know you best, and they'll say what they think if it's for your benefit. If they think your partner is no good, listen. They'll be there for you when he or she isn't.

17. You compare them with other men or women.

It's natural to find other people attractive, but not to compare your lover unfavourably with every person who catches your eye.

18. You look up your exes.

It's fine to be friends with exes, and it shows maturity. But if you seek out and flirt with an ex, then you arrange to meet up with them, and find yourself wondering "what if...?", your current relationship is doomed.

19. You wish they'd change.

Once the rose-tinted early months have passed, mismatched personalities become more obvious. You can't change your partner into someone better suited to you. Instead, find someone who's already your perfect match.

20. You say "I love you" but don't mean it.

Do you feel a little knot of guilt whenever you say it, as though you're lying? Do you only say it to make them shut up and go away? Then stop saying it, and start spending more time with someone you really love – starting with yourself.

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