

relationships

RED FLAGS

Are You in The Wrong Relationship?

Five early signs that tell you it's just not right. **BY JOHN KIM**



T **HERE ARE** many elements to consider when evaluating an intimate relationship and its potential. One, of course, is the amount of work each partner feels he or she has to put into it to keep it going. But there are a number of signs that could help you know whether a relationship is wrong for you—before you invest too much into it. All of them draw on your own sense of self as a measure of the long-term viability of a relationship.

By the way, it's possible that

some of these signs appeared in prior relationships—though you didn't get out when you could have. If so, give yourself a break: You had a different point of view back then, and there's no need to feel regretful about your past or panicked about a current relationship.

Taking in the following points will help you sharpen your radar. It could lead you to more honest conversations with your partner or a realization that you need to shift your own ways of being in a relationship.

1. YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU

Everything you've liked about yourself—who you are, what makes you uniquely you—has faded or gone. This happens often in relationships, it happens gradually. Otherwise, we would notice and pay attention right away.

Sometimes partners try to exert control over us and call their behavior “love.” Over time, such actions strip away who we are or who we want to be. Then, one day, we wake up, look in the mirror, and don't recognize ourselves. This is a sign—a bad one.

In truth, a loss of self may not be 100 percent the other person's fault. If it characterizes all of your relationships, the common denominator may be you. It's easy to lose oneself in a relationship. It's often a consequence of seeing love as requiring self-sacrifice, rather than as healthy compromises and growing together. Understanding the nature of love usually leads to thinking about your upbringing and what you learned about the experience of love as a child. So be aware and work on finding yourself again, no matter what it takes. If you can't, you'll never bring you to the relationship.

2. YOU'RE CONSTANTLY TRYING TO PROVE YOUR WORTH

It's bad enough that you have to constantly seek your worth in the world. But if you have to do it in your relationships, something is wrong. Relationships are the one place where you shouldn't have to prove your worth.

How can you tell whether you're constantly trying to prove your worth? Hint: It's not the same as seeking approval or validation, which we all do to a certain degree:

- *Your ideas are shot down
- *Your partner doesn't support your dreams
- *You rarely get to talk about yourself
- *Your partner may listen to you but doesn't seem to hear you
- *You feel invisible

It's not your partner's job to make you feel valuable, but it is his or her job to make you feel like your worth is recognized rather than ignored—or even bashed. Your relationship shouldn't make you feel invisible; it should make you feel invincible.

3. YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE WITNESSING A RELATIONSHIP INSTEAD OF BEING IN ONE

Many people slip into a state in which they let life happen to them instead of engaging and living to their fullest—and making their dent in the universe. You can start to go through the motions

of life rather than fully living your own.

The same can happen in relationships. You recognize the relationship but you no longer engage in it. You know that you're taken, not single. You know the important dates and when to buy gifts. You know the routine for dinner. You know what your partner likes in bed. But all of this is information, not presence. The relationship is not built on deep love but on routines. It's a big sign. Scratch that: It's a giant banner that says This Is Not Working.

4. YOU BREAK UP WITH YOU

At some point, you've ended the relationship you had with yourself. You've given up or given in—and you may not even realize it.



**At some point,
you've ended the
relationship you
had with yourself.
You've given up.**



Maybe you have convinced yourself that what you have is what a relationship is supposed to look like. Maybe you've told yourself that "true love" means finding someone who makes you want to live longer and be a better person. And maybe that's how you've justified changing yourself to make the relationship work.

Whatever the case, if you are no longer you, if your needs are no longer being met, you are probably in the wrong relationship. At this point, it's not about the signs. It's about the whys.

5. THEY WEAR ORANGE PANTS. SERIOUSLY.

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