

Is Your Difficult Relationship Harming You?



There are many reasons why you might be in a difficult relationship. Fear of being single, resistance to change, concern for the children involved, and other issues often keep unhappy couples together long after the love has gone.

In fact, the average couple waits four years to end a dysfunctional relationship, according to one survey by eHarmony. Meanwhile, the effects of staying with an incompatible partner may be more serious than you think.

Consider these thoughtful tips for what to do if you're in a relationship that may be harming your overall wellbeing.

Build Your Self-Esteem

Relationship troubles can undermine your confidence. Believing in yourself will make it easier to recognize your options and move forward as a couple or on your own.

Practicing these strategies will help you raise your self-esteem:

1. **Set goals.** Go beyond your comfort zone and give yourself something to strive for. With each new accomplishment, **you'll realize how strong and resilient you really are.**
2. **Practice self-care.** Honor your needs. Eat a nutritious diet and stay physically active. Find a hobby that allows you to express your creativity. Develop rituals that maintain your spiritual health.
3. **Seek support.** Reach out to family and friends. Share your thoughts and feelings. Let them know how they can assist you.
4. **Help others.** Generosity can transform your life. Focusing on others changes your perspective on your own situation. Your sense of fulfillment will grow.

Set and Maintain Healthy Boundaries

Does your partner criticize you unfairly or give you the silent treatment? **Advocating for yourself can help you to cope** while you make longer-term plans.

Use these tips to maintain healthy boundaries:

1. **Change your response.** Pick a quiet time to talk with your partner about how you expect to be treated. Otherwise, you may inadvertently contribute to your mistreatment by trying to ignore the situation or becoming overwhelmed by your emotions.
2. **Aim for consistency.** Determine the consequences for violating your boundaries and stick to them. For example, you might set a daily limit for nonemergency calls and texts.
3. **Deal with retaliation.** What if your partner blocks your efforts? At some point, you may want to consider whether the negatives outweigh the positives for you. You'll struggle to find happiness in a relationship that compromises your values.

Creating an Exit Strategy if You Need It

Many studies suggest that being single is healthier than being in an unhappy relationship. If you're ready to say goodbye, **think through your decision carefully and make concrete plans to address any obstacles in your way.**

These tips will help:

1. **Take accountability.** Be honest about the role you played in the decline of your relationship. Evaluating your behavior may help you to form healthier connections in the future.
2. **Be civil. Treat your partner with kindness and respect.** If possible, break up with them face to face. Give them an opportunity to speak their mind and let them know that you appreciate the time you spent together.
3. **Negotiate co-parenting.** Splitting up is more complicated when children are involved. However, you can continue being loving and responsible parents

without living under the same roof.

4. **Arrange your finances.** You may also share a house with your partner or depend on them for income. Start calculating your budget for independent living, so you can get a head start on cutting your expenses and increasing your earnings.
5. **Try counseling.** If you need more help, contact a therapist who specializes in relationships. Ask family and friends for referrals or call the psychology department at your local university.

With work, **it's sometimes possible to turn a difficult relationship around.** These tips can help.

Sometimes however, depending on your situation, the unfortunate reality may be that you cannot turn it around.

Ending a difficult relationship is difficult in itself, but it also sets you free to find the love you deserve. You'll have more time and energy for making positive changes and creating the life you really want.

Seek counseling and other support during this difficult time. It will help you to sort out your feelings and issues, so you can follow the path that is best for you.