

# 8 Ways to Ruin Your Relationship

While most of the time we try and stay positive here on *World of Psychology*, every now and again reality sucker-punches us back to our senses (although not personally affecting me).

The fact remains that despite our wise advice over the years, we haven't budged the divorce rate in the U.S. (not that we thought we could!). Most relationships fail — there's simply no way to argue with it.

So maybe it would help some of our readers to catch a sign of their failing relationship before it's too late. Sure, we all would like to think that we could see the end of our relationship coming from a mile away. But truth is, many of us need a little help.

To that end, here are 8 ways you can bet you're ruining your relationship and heading to splitsville.

## 1. Take your partner for granted.

There's no better way to help hurry the end of the relationship than to just assume your partner is always there to make your life easier. Whether it's by going to work or staying at home, cooking dinner or doing the grocery shopping, the ins and outs of our everyday existence can take an especially hard toll when it comes to taking that special someone in our lives for granted.

Acknowledge your significant other's efforts to your joint relationship and life together (no matter who is doing what). Say "Thank you" and "please" for being served something or for someone doing you a favor. After all, you wouldn't treat a stranger in your home in that manner, so why would you treat the one you love any worse?

## 2. Stop talking.

Remember the start of your relationship? You couldn't stop talking! You might've spent all night talking to one another, or countless hours on the phone or cuddled up on a couch somewhere.

Relationships die when the two people in it stop talking. And I don't mean actual, physical talking ("We talk all the time!"). I mean the kind of real, honest conversations that couples have all the time at the beginning of a relationship, but which fade over time. Here's help for improving your communication with your partner.

That fading is a natural progression in most relationships. The key is to not let that fading turn into never having those real conversations (which aren't about the kids, your jobs, or what you read on TMZ today).

## 3. Stop expressing your feelings.

As we go along in a relationship, it's also natural to stop saying, "I love you" as often. Or showing anger when you're angry at your partner, or showing adoration when you're feeling especially loving toward them. It's as if the extremes of our emotions are taken away, and all we have left is a lot of moderate, unsexy feelings.

As much as you might think those feelings are too boring to share, they remain just as important to share. Yes, the passionate feelings at the beginning of any relationship tend to fade for most people. But that doesn't mean you stop feeling, or that you should stop telling your loved one how you feel.

## 4. Stop listening.

Nobody likes to not be heard. So there's no better way to kill a relationship than to stop listening to what your partner has to say.

It shows a lack of respect for the person, and of course your significant other will pick up on the fact that you're no longer listening. If nobody's listening, how can a relationship grow or thrive? Especially important is something called active listening, which shows your partner you're actively engaged in the conversation.

## **5. Kill the fun.**

We hook up together in life for many reasons — shared perspectives and outlooks, physical attraction, shared spirituality, shared professional lives, etc. But we also enjoy one another's company because it's fun!

When fun leaves a relationship, it can be a sign that the relationship is heading to the rocks. Fun is a part of life and it's definitely a part of any healthy relationship. However you and your significant other define fun, it's important to keep doing it even as your relationship matures.

Love to dance but haven't been in years? It's time to make a new dance date. Met while hiking or kayaking, but haven't made time to do it in months (or years)? Pack the backpack and get your outdoors on.

## **6. Nitpick.**

Boy, am I guilty of this one! I've probably nitpicked a few past relationships into an early death. Not because I wanted to, but because it was a personal concern whose impact I never fully understood (until it was too late).

Nobody likes being told what to do, or how to do it. While some people may be more open to "suggestions" than other from their helpful partner, it can also be seen as nitpicking for little good reason.

Really? There's a "better" way to clean the sink? That's nice... use it the next time you do it then.

When I want to nitpick nowadays, I just keep in mind that if I want to go to the trouble of offering unrequested advice, I might as well suggest I do it myself. Or just do it next time myself, without having someone needing to ask.

Nitpicking may be a sign of needing to "control" others, but it may also just be a sign of the way some people were brought up. In any case, it's a bad habit and one you should try and curtail in your relationship.

## **7. Threaten.**

Wow, threatening your significant other is such a turn-on. Yeah, no it's not. Whether you're threatening to leave, chop off a bit of anatomy, tell someone's parents, or find a better life in Maui, it's never a good sign for a healthy relationship.

Threats are often made in an act of desperation or feeling like a situation is out of control — the threat is an attempt to regain control. However, threats are juvenile and more suited for children's temper tantrums than an adult, mature relationship.

When a partner resorts to threats, it's time to re-evaluate the relationship's long-term potential.

## **8. Ignore your partner.**

They say the one thing worse than being hated by someone is simply to be ignored by them. Being ignored means the person doesn't even care enough to waste the energy of anger on you.

The same is true with relationships. If you take a lot of the previous tips and add them together, you have active ignoring. If you're ignoring your partner (or vice-a-versa) for any period of time longer than a few days, that's a sure sign the relationship is in trouble.

You don't hook up with a person only to be ignored by them. If anybody wanted that, we'd simply go relive our high school prom. (Oops, I shared too much!)

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The good news is that these signs don't necessarily mean your relationship is over. There is always hope, especially when both of you recognize some of these signs and decide you want to reconnect to try and grow your relationship.

If you can't do it on your own — and a weekend getaway may be a good way to try — don't fret. Although it may sound scary or extreme to think about, **this is exactly what couple's counseling is for**. Any good couple's therapist can help most couples improve their relationship in just a few sessions (although it may take more than a few, depending upon the seriousness of the problems).

Talk to your partner about your concerns. Then seek help if your own personal attempts to help improve the relationship don't work out. I believe a great number of relationships have the possibility of being saved, if both partners are committed to working on changing it — and then take action.

**Dr. John Grohol** is the founder & CEO of Psych Central. He is an author, researcher and expert in mental health online, and has been writing about online behavior, mental health and psychology issues -- as well as the intersection of technology and human behavior -- since 1992. Dr. Grohol sits on the editorial board of the journal *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* and is a founding board member and treasurer of the Society for Participatory Medicine.

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