

Top 10 - Relationship Wreckers

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1. Neglecting Your Partner (ignoring, workaholism, addictions):

A primary function of a relationship is to provide companionship and to meet each other's needs. When other activities, interests or preoccupations interfere with our availability, we can wind up short-changing our partner. This can be thought of as absenteeism or being MIA. Taking an inventory and making adjustments in how we spend our time is the first step in correcting this problem. Treat your partner as the important person they are by spending enough quality time together to satisfy each of your requirements in this area and to maintain your connection.

2. Depriving Your Partner (not being attentive, expressive, affectionate, supportive, caring, loving): Being there physically is not enough. We cannot expect our relationship to thrive if we withdraw emotionally for extended periods of time. In order to be fully present, we must be aware of our partner and be willing to show how we feel both verbally and non-verbally. Expressing love through affection and caring behaviors are crucial to keeping a relationship strong and vibrant. Small regular doses of intimacy will usually suffice, and the most important times of day to communicate positively are upon waking, upon reuniting after a long day, and before going to sleep.

3. Dishonesty & Betrayal (infidelity, lying): Most people are aware that the foundation of any relationship is T-R-U-S-T. In no relationship is trust more important than in a relationship between mates, except for a parent and dependent child relationship. Cheating and lying breaks down the basis for a relationship, and often results in its demise. A problem of this nature is serious, and resolving it must be a top priority if the relationship is to survive. Couples counseling is highly recommended in order to facilitate the changes that are needed.

4. Attacking Your Partner (blaming, abuse - physical, emotional, sexual):

Aggressive communication is simply unacceptable, especially if the abuse is getting physical. Physical or sexual abuse are deal-breakers in a marriage, and should prompt a permanent separation. The abusive partner needs to get professional help to learn skills in anger management, in order to gain and consistently demonstrate better control over his or her emotions and behavior. Even if the help is sought and progress is made, the risk of recurrence remains high, so in most cases, the abused partner should not return to the relationship. Returning serves to reinforce the abusive behavior, leading to increased severity and frequency of subsequent abuse. Instead, the abused partner should also seek help, and work through issues that have potential to lead one into another abusive relationship. Verbally blaming, accusing, and insulting your partner are less extreme forms of destructiveness, but are not OK either, and assertiveness training can provide the essential skills for healthy communication.

5. Scapegoating (taking your anger or frustration out on you partner):

We all know that it's not right to kick the dog after a hard day at work, so why do it to your partner? Being held responsible for things that are out of our control is the most stressful of conditions, and that is what we do to our partner when we scapegoat them. Rather than hurt the ones you love, do what it takes to meet the real problem head-on, as effectively as you can. If you are unsure of how to address a problem, the strong and mature thing to do is to ask for help and support from trusted sources (i.e., a friend, relative, or therapist).

6. Negativism (nitpicking, nagging, criticizing):

In order to have a good relationship, the positives must outweigh the negatives by a large percentage. If negativity is creeping into your relationship, it is like water seeping into walls, eventually weakening the structure. People usually feel good around others who are upbeat and positive, as well as those who help them to feel good about themselves. Bringing a negative spirit into your relationship crowds out the positive. However, pushing aside or neglecting to address real problems is not the answer either, and can be just as harmful to relationship health as dwelling on the negative. So pick your battles wisely, strive to communicate effectively, and practice cooperative negotiation.

7. Gossiping (telling family or friends about your problems but not addressing them with your partner): That's right, if you are talking about the problems in your relationship with friends or relatives but not working on improving the situation, that amounts to gossip. Gossip is not a productive way to handle problems, and can result in additional problems. For instance, your partner may feel betrayed that you revealed sensitive material to others that cause him or her to be embarrassed or uncomfortable around them. Also, if you promote a negative side of your partner or your relationship, others may get a distorted view, and changes in their attitudes and behavior may follow. Others may remember your conflicts long after you and your partner have gotten past them. Instead, work on improving your communication skills. Turn toward your partner, not away. If you need help, seek out the assistance of an objective third party such as a therapist who works with couples. When it comes to your needs, stop complaining and start asking!

8. Controlling Your Partner ("my way" or else, perfectionism, trying to change your partner, possessiveness): Wanting things to be a certain way and having preferences are completely natural and even healthy. However, when this tendency becomes extreme and starts to encroach on the rights, needs and desires of others, it can cause major havoc. Freedom of will and self-determination are basic needs, and when these are being threatened, negative reactions may include anger, resentment, and/or rebellion. If the need to control is a problem in your relationship, identify the motivations behind it and work towards dealing with those issues rather than acting them out with your partner.

9. Putting Yourself First (self-centeredness, selfishness, entitlement):

It's not "all about me," folks. Letting one's self interests take priority in an unbalanced way can be toxic to a partnership. The other person usually winds up feeling deprived, resentful, and unimportant. Furthermore, the more self-involved you are, the more you take your relationship for granted, the less you appreciate your partner, and the more alone you actually are. So if your relationship is slanted in this way, you also lose out, because you experience less of the joy that a true connection brings. You and you partner both get more from the relationship through reciprocity in giving and receiving.

10. Putting Yourself Last (self-neglect, passivity, self sacrifice):

Martyrs are seldom happy. More often, they are angry, bitter, resentful, depressed and burned out. This is not to say that you should not consider others and be thoughtful in meeting their needs. But having a healthy relationship involves factoring your own needs and desires into the equation. You teach people how to treat you, and if you act like a doormat, you can't completely blame someone if they wipe their feet on you. Learn how to stand up for yourself, practice assertive communication, ask and allow others to meet your needs, and take care of yourself as much as you take care of your loved ones.

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