

Do You Recognize These Signs of a One-Sided Relationship?

It's possible you're in denial. But these nine signs are hard to ignore.

By Sara Stillman Berger Sep 24, 2019



Some things are better one-sided: An ice cream cone you don't want to share, your high school diary, and a game of solitaire—for example. But a healthy relationship? That's a two-sided situation. Unfortunately, when you're stuck in a one-sided relationship, it's easy to fool yourself into thinking that what you're experiencing is normal—when it could actually be toxic, or even loveless, says Jill P. Weber Ph.D. clinical psychologist and author of *Having Sex, Wanting Intimacy: Why Women Settle for One-Sided Relationships*. So how do you know if you're giving more than you're getting? We asked the experts to share some tell-tale signs.

You're constantly second-guessing yourself.

Am I pretty enough? Smart enough? Funny enough? Weber says that if you find that you're repeatedly asking yourself whether you live up to your partner's expectations, it's possible that your relationship is one-sided. “You are focusing your attention and energy more on being liked than on truly being known and nurtured,” she says. Instead, she recommends learning to be authentic within yourself. In doing so, you will attract relationships that match the true you.

You apologize more than you need to.

Sure, sometimes you're at fault. But if you end up saying you're sorry EVERY. SINGLE. FIGHT it's time to take a deeper look at your relationship. You may think you're helping by not rocking the boat, but this kind of behavior is an unhealthy sign. “Avoiding conflict results in dismissing your own feelings,” says Cori Dixon-Fyle, founder and psychotherapist at Thriving Path. Relationship expert Dr. Juliana Morris agrees. “Conflict resolution in a relationship should be a team approach,” she says. “It should never be one person's responsibility.”

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You're always making excuses for your partner.

Playing defense is good...on the soccer field. But if you're consistently justifying your partner's behavior to your circle of friends, family and work then it's likely they are seeing something you are not. "In my former marriage, I remember often saying 'He's just cranky today,'" says certified relationship expert Keren Eldad. "Turns out, he was not. He was abusive." Eldad stresses, "If all the others in your life are alarmed, you may have reason to be, too."

You feel insecure about your relationship.

If you often question the status of your relationship and are never truly at ease with your partner, then that's a sign that you are in a one-sided relationship, according to Weber. If you can't stop analyzing how you can be more alluring, and what you can say or wear to keep your partner desiring you, because you feel so unsettled, that could be a red flag. To be all-consumed with the relationship is not only exhausting, it's not sustainable, Weber says. Kelli Miller, LCSW, MSW, relationship expert and author agrees: "If you're constantly feeling depleted, you're working too hard in the relationship," she says.

Your partner's calendar takes priority.

Do you move your commitments around and/or wait until you know if your partner is available before you make other plans? When you feel like everything else is more important than you are, then you're likely in a one-sided relationship, according to Morris. "There should be a balanced adjustment to schedules," she says. Eldad

agrees: "If your partner only wants to see you when it suits them, then there is inequity in the relationship," she says.

You do all of the heavy lifting.

Are you the one making all the plans, doing all the chores, *and* remembering his grandmother's birthday? Asks Eldad. If so, consider stopping. "You are giving way too much and expecting too little," she says. According to Ellen Chute, LMSW, "Often people give and give with the unconscious expectation that the giving will be returned, only the other person never had those intentions." On the other hand, it's ok if your relationship goes through stages where one partner seems to carry the load more than the other. "Many relationships feel one-sided *at points* but often even out over time," she says.

And all the initiating.

You shouldn't have to beg for attention and affection. Texts, phone calls, seeing each other, getting intimate... "both parties should want to connect physically and emotionally," says Miller. "If you're looking at your friends' relationships and wishing yours was like theirs, or you're wishing your partner would do the things your friend's partners do, that might be a red flag," she says.

Your partner says you "want too much".

Is it "too much" to want to spend the weekend together? "Too much" to want to meet his family? "Too much" to want to share emotions? Many partners in one-sided relationships are unwilling, or not interested, in giving more, says Dixon-Fyle. And unfortunately, "the person that is least committed usually has the most power," she says.

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Because somehow, you're always wrong.

If you're in a one-sided relationship, you may find that when you finally get the courage to confront your partner about how you're feeling, the tables get turned... and you end up feeling like you're at fault. This strategy allows your partner to never take responsibility for the way their actions make you feel, says Weber.

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But in order to have a healthy (two-sided) relationship, it's necessary to feel comfortable and safe expressing yourself. If you can't set boundaries with with your partner's behaviors, you allow yourself to be treated badly with no consequence, says Chute.

Knowing is half the battle.

“Denial is a huge factor in what sustains one-sided relationships,” says Weber. So if you're reading this and thinking, 'uh-oh, this pretty much describes my relationship,'

you're moving in the right direction towards fixing things. But now that you're aware...what's next?

You have the power to change things.

It may surprise you to know that it's not entirely your partner's fault: "People tend to attract the types of relationships they think they deserve," says Dixon-Fyle. "If someone is struggling with their own self-worth and self-acceptance, they tend to stay in one-sided relationships too long." The best way to fix this, according to Weber, is to step away and work on your own self-growth, instead of trying to save the relationship. Dixon-Fyle agrees: "Your focus should be on flourishing your own life, instead of allowing your partner to be the main focus," she says. In other words, You Do You. The rest will come.

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