

5 Red Flags to Be Aware of In Your Relationship



By Grace Pamer

I am a fan of the show *Dexter*, and was probably just as surprised as everyone else that the two stars, Jennifer Carpenter and Michael C. Hall, filed for divorce. The couple appeared happy, like best friends, being married and working as a team on the award winning show. When Michael C. Hall was diagnosed with cancer, Carpenter was at his side helping him through it all. But later, Hall's break trust via rumors of infidelity made their way into the relationship, resulting in its dissolution.

We may, as a society, idolize stars and follow the ups and

downs of their relationships. But the truth is that their partnerships are very similar to us “normal folks,” minus the millions. We may be in shock when a famous couple that appeared so committed announces their divorce, but it can happen to any couple at any time. Though couples are, by definition, a team – they are also two unique individuals, with their own thoughts, feelings, experiences and emotional baggage.

The seemingly best relationship can go wrong, even mine. Noticing that there might be trouble is the key to trying to work things out before it is too late. Keep in mind that there can be valid reasons for the following relationship warning signs and that they in no way are intended to imply certain doom. There can be stress at work, grieving a loss, a family member moving in or a health issue that appropriately explains away any concerns in the short term.

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But sometimes there are no valid reasons for the following five red flags, which can appear in even what seems to be the healthiest relationship:

Red Flag 1: Losing Trust

If we find ourselves beginning to doubt our partner's honesty, we need to listen to our inner voices. Whether catching a mate in frequent, little lies is the trigger or there is a bigger concern because our lover is keeping longer hours and coming home late each night, losing trust is a signal to us that something could be wrong.

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Red Flag 2: Avoidance

If we begin to see our partner less and less, without explanation, this is another red flag. It can spell trouble

when rituals such as watching favorite shows on weeknights, doing crosswords in bed, eating meals together or weekend date nights begin to disappear. Keep in mind that avoidance doesn't have to equate to infidelity – it could signify fear and distraction over a health concern, depression and a host of many other things.

Red Flag 3: Acting Guilty

Humans are curious creatures and sometimes, without even knowing it, their actions speak much louder than words. A lover who traditionally was never one to bring home flowers or expensive gifts, if feeling guilty, might subconsciously begin to do just that.

Red Flag 4: Less Intimacy

If we notice less intimacy, that could also be a warning sign that there is an underlying problem. Intimacy isn't just about making love, though that is a big part in healthy relationships – it is about touching a lover's shoulder when we walk by, holding hands when taking a walk, massaging feet when lying on the couch. If usual intimacy levels begin to decline, we need to recognize the warning sign that something is awry.

Red Flag 5: Lack Of Respect

Respect is so important in any successful relationship. Being respectful is when we don't ridicule our lover for having his/her own opinion. It is about sharing the load and responsibilities of daily life. Respecting a mate also involves making sure both people's needs are met, not just our own. If the partner begins to criticize, ridicule or take the other for granted, there could be an underlying problem.

Aside from the red flags mentioned above, we need to simply be aware of any unexplained changes in the relationship. The goal here isn't to play detective and "catch" our partner in a misdeed, going on the offensive. That could backfire because

an innocent partner being accused of guilt could cause irreparable damage. Consider how a lover would act if he or she didn't want to burden us with the stress that there are rumors of layoffs at the workplace. There can be many valid reasons why a person starts acting differently.

It is our job to simply communicate our concerns in a peaceful, loving manner – stating only how we feel, not criticizing behaviors. When red flags appear, the only goal should be to find a block of time in a quiet environment where open, honest communication can take place. Behavior changes aren't always about infidelity and red flags aren't always bad – they can actually lead to a healthier, more stable relationship, because they force us to put our love first.

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