

# Relationship Advice: Communicate Dislikes like John Legend & Chrissy Teigen



By Dr. Jane Greer

When you are first falling in love it seems that your partner can do no wrong. He always wants to try new things? Exciting! She wants to stay in her pajamas over the weekend and not go out? Cozy! He wants to read by himself every night? Focused! But over time these quirks or specific behaviors can become, well, annoying. What if you don't want to constantly try new things? Or what if you want to get dressed and leave the house on Saturday and Sunday? Or what if you occasionally want to watch TV with him? And this doesn't even begin to cover the other behaviors and habits that might creep in over time, such

as personal habits, skills or lack thereof, and the varied willingness to take on household responsibilities. What do you do when all those things you once liked so much start to grate at you? How open can and should you be? Celebrity couple John Legend and Chrissy Teigen recently had to face this situation when they brought it to the extreme and took a lie detector test. John ended up telling the truth about a meal Chrissy made that “wasn’t great.” Whether it’s a dinner your partner cooked that you didn’t like, or the fact that he or she never puts away any clothes, it’s important to think about how to communicate these dislikes to your partner before they really become a problem.

## **How can you communicate your dislikes without offending them and hurting their feelings, and creating another problem altogether?**

This whole scenario begins with the assumption that you are supposed to tell your partner everything you don’t like about them – isn’t honesty always the best policy? Generally the answer is yes, but there are certain ways to approach these situations that will enhance your connection instead of undermining it. In a relationship, there will always be some things that turn you on and others that turn you off. The big question is determining what you can live with, and what you can’t and therefore need to talk about and work toward a change. Whether it has to do with appearance and what you perceive as bad taste, or just a general personality flaw that has become more apparent, decide first if it is important enough to bring up. In other words, how much is it going to drive you crazy and get under your skin, possibly eventually driving a wedge between you? If you decide it falls into that

serious box, it's important to think before you express your dislike. Attempt to frame your words so it is clear you are on your partner's side. If it is a bad haircut or an unflattering dress, you might be doing them a favor by letting them know since they can either choose to go to a different salon for their next haircut or wear a different dress. You want to be careful and mindful in the way you present it because otherwise it could come across as criticism or blame. When that happens your partner might feel anxious, insecure, and afraid to try to make the meal again, or to take the cooking lessons, or reluctant to take risks for fear of failure and disappointing you and opening the door to more criticism, which is all the opposite of what you want to achieve.

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Along these lines, instead of talking about what you don't like, talk about what you would like next time. You might think the chicken is too creamy and rich, in which case you could say, "that was good, but it might taste even better if you used a little less cream next time." In this way both of you can feel encouraged about the next effort instead of discouraged. If, for example, your partner constantly throws clothes on the floor and you find the bedroom unrelaxing because of that, you might say that if he or she could put away some of the garments you would want to spend more time in the bedroom. This will definitely work better than being judgmental and saying they are messy or a slob. Look to voice your concern in terms of what you would like them to be doing in the future rather than what they just did wrong in your eyes.

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The golden rule of thumb is to try to avoid letting things go until you become really resentful, because that can lead to what I refer to in my book *What About Me? Stop Selfishness*

From Ruining Your Relationship as Love You, Mean It, Hate You, Mean It moments. We always start out with an abundance of Love You, Mean It moments. However, over time the Hate You, Mean It moments inevitably build up and can eclipse the positive ones. By talking to your partner it enables you to preserve the good feelings so that you can strike a balance and always find your way back to the love that you feel for them. It is a matter of knowing what to accept about who they are versus what you are looking to work toward changing with them.

While John and Chrissy may have jumped right to the lie detector test, most people take a slower road to their confessions. It is important to think of the right approach when sharing your dislikes. Keeping balance, caring, and encouragement at the forefront rather than criticism and blame is always a better way to go. Hopefully whatever truth you tell will be offered with grace so the good can continue to outweigh the bad.

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