

Too Good to Leave Too Bad to Stay

By Mira Kirshenbaum

Many thanks to Ms. Kirshenbaum for permission to post her Guide.

A Step-By-Step Guide to Help You Decide Whether to Stay In or Get Out of Your Relationship

1. Think about that time when things between you and your partner were at their best. Look back, would you now say that things were really very good between you then?
2. Has there been more than one incident of physical violence in your relationship?
3. Have you already made a concrete commitment to pursue a course of action or lifestyle that definitely excludes your partner?
4. If God or some omniscient being said it was okay to leave, would you feel tremendously relieved and have a strong sense that finally you could end your relationship?
5. In spite of your problems, do you and your partner have even one positively pleasurable activity or interest (besides children) you currently share and look forward to sharing in the future, something to do together that you both like and that give both of you a feeling of closeness for a while?
6. Would you say that to you your partner is basically nice, reasonably intelligent not too neurotic, okay to look at, and most of the time smells all right?
7. Does your partner bombard you with difficulties when you try to get even the littlest thing you want; and is it your experience that almost any need you have gets obliterated; and if you ever do get what you want, is getting it such an ordeal that you don't feel it was worth all the effort?
8. Do you have a basic, recurring, never-completely-going-away feeling of humiliation or invisibility in your relationship?
9. Does it seem to you that your partner generally and consistently blocks your attempts to bring up topics or raise questions, particularly about things you care about?
10. Have you gotten to the point when your partner says something, that you usually feel it's more likely that he's lying than that he's telling the truth?

11. In spite of admirable qualities, and stepping back from any temporary anger or disappointment, do you genuinely like your partner, and does your partner seem to like you?
12. Do you feel willing to give your partner more than you're giving already, and are you willing to do this the way things are between you now, without any expectation of being paid back?
13. Do both you and your partner want to touch each other and look forward to touching each other and make efforts to touch each other?
14. Do you feel a unique sexual attraction to your partner?
15. Does your partner neither see nor admit things you've tried to get him to acknowledge that make your relationship too bad to stay in?
16. Is there something your partner does that makes your relationship too bad to stay in and that he acknowledges but that, for all intents and purposes, he's unwilling to do anything about?
17. This problem your partner has that makes you want to leave: have you tried to let it go, ignore it, stop letting it bother you? And were you successful?
18. As you think about your partner's problem that makes your relationship too bad to stay in, does he acknowledge it and is he willing to do something about it *and is he able to change?*
19. Has your partner violated what for you is a bottom line?
20. Is there a clearly formulated, passionately held difference between you that has to do with the shape and texture and quality of your life as you actually experience it?
21. In spite of all the ways you're different, would you say that deep down or in some respect that's important to you your partner is someone just like you in a way you feel good about?
22. With your new, more complete, more realistic set of information about what it would be like for you if you left, have you discovered new, more probable realities that now make leaving seem impossibly difficult or unpleasant?

23. With your new, more complete, more realistic set of information about what it would be like to leave, have you discovered new, more probable realities that now make leaving seem easier, more attractive, and make staying no longer desirable?
24. Does your partner do such a good job of conveying the idea that you're a nut or a jerk or a loser or an idiot about parts of yourself that are important to you that you've started to really become demonstrably convinced of it yourself?
25. As you think about your partner's disrespect, is it clear to you that you do everything possible to limit your contact with your partner, except for times where you absolutely must interact?
26. Do you feel that your partner, overall and more often than not, shows concrete support for and genuine interest in the things you're trying to do that are important to you?
27. Would you lose anything important in your life if your partner were no longer your partner? Is what you'd lose something that makes you feel good about your partner for being able to provide it?
28. Whatever was done that caused hurt and betrayal, do you have the sense that the pain and damage has lessened with time?
29. Is there a demonstrated capacity and mechanism for genuine forgiveness to your relationship?
30. Is it likely that, if you have a reasonable need, you and your partner will be able to work out a way for you to get it met without too painful a struggle?
31. Is there some particular need that's so important to you that if you don't get it met, looking back you'll say that your life wasn't satisfying, and are you starting to get discouraged about every being able to get it met?
32. Given the way your partner acts, does it feel as though in getting close to you what he's most interested in is subjecting you to his anger and criticism?
33. When the subject of intimacy comes up between you and your partner, is there generally a battle over what intimacy is and how to get it?
34. Does your relationship support your having fun together?

35. Do you currently share goals and dreams for your life together?

36. If all the problems in your relationship were magically solved today, would you still feel ambivalent about whether to stay or leave?