Recognizing the Signs of an Unhealthy Relationship

(Not just for romantic relationships)

Written by: Maya Bingaman

Some relationships are happy, healthy and between you and someone who makes you feel confident, loved and supported. However, there are relationships that are the total opposite of this. These are relationships we often avoid talking about. These are relationships with the people who are toxic to our well-being. These are unhealthy relationships. The hardest thing about being in a toxic relationship is that you may not even know it or you may not expect it due to the person's position in your life and your feelings towards the person. Unhealthy relationships can form in romantic relationships, friendships and even relationships with family members. In this blog, I will cover a few questions you should ask yourself if you feel like you're in a toxic relationship. Some of the questions are more subtle than you'd expected.

Are you walking on eggshells?

If you dread interacting with someone because you know from past experiences that things can go sour quickly if the person doesn't hear or get what they want, it could be a sign that the person is harmful to your well-being. You shouldn't be afraid to voice your opinion or speak freely due to fear of how someone will react.

Do you often find yourself doing things that you don't want to do?

Don't mistake this with compromising. Compromising is about meeting each other half way. Control is when a person wants to regulate and dominate things so that things work in their favor. A person who is toxic will manipulate you to accomplish whatever is in their agenda. For example, maybe you suggest going out to dinner at place X but your friend claims that "you always get what you want" and pushes for dinner at place Y. Even though you know that you don't always get what you want, you still go along with what he/she says anyway.

Is everything always your fault?

If you have someone in your life who doesn't take responsibility for their feelings/actions and blames you for things out of your control, you may need to re-evaluate your relationship with the person. Example: If you have a roommate who constantly initiates arguments with you and blames you for their lack of a social life when the real reason why people won't hang out with him/her is because he/she is hostile and not putting effort into forming healthy friendships, then you need to end all unnecessary interaction with your roommate and maybe even request a room change. Don't let someone's lack of accountability and negative attitude ruin your good vibes.

Have you become isolated from other people?

If you have noticed that your relationship with someone has meant severing ties with other people you care about, it could be a sign of an unhealthy relationship. For example, have you found that your mom does nothing but complain about your friends, roommate, significant other and demands that you come home whenever you get a chance? Have you ever experienced being guilt tripped by your S.O for spending time with your friends? Or maybe your S.O. never wants to do things as a group because he/she wants all of your attention. If you have ever been in those situations or similar situations, you may need to reconsidered the type of people you want in your life.

Are your feelings dismissed?

When you are upset or anxious, is someone telling you that you're too high maintenance, sensitive, or dramatic? Someone who cares about you should listen to and accept your feelings without the phrase "get over it" being mentioned. Your mental health is important, don't let someone tell you that it's not.

Is the effort one sided?

Have you found that you are always the one going above and beyond in the relationship? Maybe you always plan and pay for dates or you're always expected to do favors for your friends but no one ever seems to reciprocate the effort. Hearing "thank you" is nice and all but if someone never puts in effort to show you they appreciate what you have already done, are they really a good person to keep close? Actions do speak louder than words.

I believe that everyone has experienced a toxic person at one point in their life but I also believe that we have all been the harmful person at least once, too. Take some time to reflect on these questions, and if you find that they apply to you more often than not, you may be in a destructive relationship. If you can think of a person in your life who could answer "yes" to these questions in reference to you, maybe you need to re-evaluate how you treat others as well.

To learn more about The Red Flag Campaign, click the flag: