

Red Flags to Watch for in a Potential Life Partner

If you've ever ignored red flags in a new relationship, only to regret it later, this guide is for you! Not sure what the red flags are? Read on!

Doubtless, when you search the internet, you come across dozens of articles and (often conflicting) opinions on the subject. How do you know which ones you can trust? Especially if you had your fingers burned in the past and you really want to do it right this time round...

The red flags we are going to describe have not only been verified by ourselves on many occasions, but also identified by psychologists and sociologists as classic predictors of relationship instability and, potentially, failure.

Looking for an unbiased view? Interestingly enough, women and men are likely to offer you very different dating and relationship advice...



Women will typically try to persuade you to compromise and lower your expectations, offering a selection of comforting platitudes to support their view, such as: “you can’t have everything”, “nobody’s perfect” or “good guys don’t grow on trees”. There is an evolutionary reason behind this.

Men, on the other hand, are more likely to think you should not “sell yourself short” and settle for anything less than perfection. They will see going from being a relatively happy single to a questionable relationship as a definite downgrade.

This is just one example of how dramatically we often differ in thinking and approach. There are evolutionary reasons behind this and several scientific theories offering an explanation, for one:



“A man is an individual in a social hierarchical order in which he is either one-up or one-down. In this world, ... [men] try and maintain the upper hand if they can, and protect themselves from others’ attempts to put them down and push them around. Life, then, is a contest, a struggle to preserve independence and avoid failure...”

*“A woman is an individual in a network of connections. In this world, conversations are negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek or give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus. They try to protect themselves from others’ attempts to push them away. Life, then, is a community, a struggle to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation...” **

Although there are many variations and exceptions, we have to admit, we are wired differently. No wonder sometimes it feels like men and women are at cross purposes!

When it comes to choosing a potential life partner, we focus on different traits / behaviours and prioritise things in our own ways. As a result, we identify different red and green flags. Nevertheless, in this guide we would like to focus on universal non-gender specific warning signs, which apply to both same-sex and heterosexual relationships.

It's important to distinguish between gender specific behaviour (just because it's different, doesn't mean it's wrong or alarming) and the signs of a potentially unhealthy relationship.

We're assuming you have been or are about to watch our "From Single to Couple" course and discover what questions you should be asking yourself before committing to a life partner.

Don't forget time is your ally: when you're experiencing passionate love or infatuation in the early days, you struggle to see the partner and your relationship objectively, but this changes over time. As you move forward, please consider this...

Relationship Red Flags: What to Look for Early On

🚩 **Red Flag No 1:** Your new date/partner is untrustworthy



OK, everyone keeps some things to themselves, especially at the start of a relationship. You can't expect your date to open up straight away and disclose every detail. Neither should you, by the way: avoid overwhelming your partner and share information gradually.

However, if they are hiding something, sooner or later, you'll inevitably notice significant inconsistencies in their stories.

When you point these out (politely, in case it's a simple misunderstanding), their explanation is likely to be convoluted or overly emotional, so it distracts you from the facts. This includes strange patterns, such as: never answering the phone at certain times, disappearing for days at a time, consistently not keeping their promises, never inviting you to their place etc. Without trust, any potential relationship is doomed.

✅ **What to watch for - summary:** inconsistency, evasiveness, lack of reliability.

🚩 **Red Flag No 2:** Your new date/partner struggles to control their temper

This seldom shows right away because most people have a certain amount of emotional intelligence and self-control. However, if you witness unreasonable displays of anger towards you or other people, it's a sure red flag.

Let's face it: at the start of any relationship, people are generally on their "best behaviour", so if they lose it at this stage, can you imagine what it's likely to be at a later stage, when they are completely at ease.

We don't mean an occasional fleeting outburst, like when you're two minutes late and you find a parking ticket on your car. Most of us are under a lot of pressure, and sometimes things just get to us!

On the other hand, inability to handle a minor disagreement without resorting to shouting, swearing or subsequent silent treatment – is another matter. Conflict in a relationship is NOT in itself a sign of trouble because no one can agree on everything all the time. It's HOW the conflict is managed.

☑ **What to watch for - summary:** rudeness, unprovoked anger, refusal to communicate in a civilised manner.

🚩 **Red Flag No 3:** Your new date/partner is manipulative

Unfortunately, manipulation can be very subtle and not so easy to detect. When you know your intentions and your actions are genuine, yet you feel somehow constantly undermined or taken advantage of by your partner – that's one of the signs you're being manipulated.

Manipulators are usually hypocritical, so when the tables are turned, you are not treated equally. They always have an excuse as to why they don't practice what they preach.

If you're a conscientious person with good ethics and can't stand someone labelling you "selfish", "uncaring" or "greedy", this trait of yours can be exploited. You become trapped in a pattern being accused of xyz, unless you give them exactly what they want. You find yourself constantly seeking their approval, going out of their way and proving you are not xyz.

☑ **What to watch for - summary:** controlling behaviour, belittling, always shift blame or responsibility.

🚩 **Red Flag No 4:** Your new date/partner is making your life difficult rather than enhancing it

Sadly, bad things happen to people all the time. Sometimes, when we're in a relationship, we have to help each other through difficult times and overcome some hurdles.

However, when you're dating and just embarking on a new adventure, but it feels like you're being dragged into a black hole, something is not quite right. For example, you're faced with your date's severe emotional or mental, financial, medical or addiction issues, and you're expected to step in and fix their life for them. The truth? They are in no place to date to begin with.

Although it's natural for many of us to show compassion and empathy, perhaps, limit it to just that and maybe some good advice and guidance. Before you go too far to turn back, assess your capacity to handle a challenge, and think before inviting trouble into your life.

If you're still convinced they are worth it, your help must be 100% altruistic without expecting anything in return, and you can never use it as a bargaining chip in future. You're mistaken if you think your investment is a guarantee of their gratitude and a healthy rewarding relationship, it rarely works like that.

Don't buy into old myths: love doesn't necessarily have to hurt; relationships aren't supposed to feel like pulling teeth.

✔ **What to watch for - summary:** deep, unresolved personal challenges, such as addiction, mental illness, debt.

🚩 **Red Flag No 5:** You are the one displaying the red flags

Unexpected, right? This may sound controversial, but please make sure you're not the one sending the wrong signals and pushing people away. It's always easier to blame everything on the other party instead of taking a look in the mirror.

Being brutally honest with yourself, check if you have unhealthy behavioural habits, such as: manipulation, game-playing, control, silencing the other, rudeness, disrespect, unfounded jealousy etc.

Are you looking for a partner who will magically make all your troubles go away?

Sorry to say, in this case, you could be part of the problem: even if your new partner has the patience of a saint, your relationship is unlikely to bring joy, happiness and security to either of you.

✔ **What to watch for - summary:** put yourself in their shoes and try to see your conduct objectively; check for all the signs above.

Why is this essential? If you've ever had your fingers burned and experienced a rocky, toxic relationship, you already know the answer.

If you've been fortunate enough to avoid it, surely, you value your freedom and sanity. We have only so much time and energy, so false starts are undesirable, and nobody wants to end up with a broken heart.

Don't worry, it's not all so bleak! As long you avoid rushing into a new relationship, you should have plenty of time to identify any worrying warning signs, if they are present, and escape unscathed.

Of course, it's entirely up to you whether you take this onboard or ignore the red flags in the hope things can be fixed. Just remember, the scenarios described above will never lead you to long-term happiness.



If you're unsure and need a more personalised approach, consider a 1:1 consultation or a series of a few sessions to evaluate your situation and concerns.

[Click here](#) to book a free confidential discovery call with Mila Smith, a certified relationship and dating coach.

Your happiness is too important to be left to chance, so let's focus on finding the right solution before it's too late.

Best wishes,

Mila & Jeremy x

* "You Just Don't Understand" by Deborah Tannen