

BUSINESS INSIDER

How to know when it's time to break up with your partner, according to dating experts



- **A break-up doesn't mean a relationship has failed.**
- **Unnecessary fights and monotonous conversations are common signs that a break-up is overdue.**
- **When there are more negatives than positives in your relationship, both you and your partner deserve more.**

Instagrammer and sex educator Zoe Ligon recently shared some important wisdom (gleaned from her time attending a sex-positive conference) with her 128,000 followers: "Relationships are NOT more important than the individuals within it," she wrote. "Ended relationships are not failed relationships. You can have all the relationships you want, or don't want."

Breakups often *do* seem like a failure — to yourself, your partner, and others' expectations of you — and avoiding that feeling is often why we stay in relationships for far longer than they serve us.

But if we *can* start to think of a breakup as something other than failure, that leaves an important question: How do we know when it's time to walk away?

To find out, I talked to two people who know more about this than I do: Shannon Smith, resident dating expert at Plenty of Fish and relationship expert and divorce attorney Vikki Ziegler, who also starred on BRAVO's show "Untying the Knot."

Here are a few signs that your relationship isn't working anymore.

1. The future doesn't look so bright

Smith and Ziegler agreed that while it's perfectly normal to be with someone who has different long-term goals than you, you've also got to be realistic about whether "your lives are going in completely different directions," as Ziegler said.

"If you find yourselves picturing a future that's quite different, sometimes breaking up can be a compassionate act that can save everyone some significant pain and resentment down the road," Smith wrote.

2. You don't recognize who you've become

True of any partnership, romantic or otherwise, we often change our habits, mannerisms, and even personality based on who we're spending time with. But while a little of that is fine, Smith told me, "If you no longer recognize yourself, and don't like who you've become, it's time to seriously shake up your routine and take a hard look at your relationship."

Importantly, if your partner "doesn't see the value in investing in yourselves to be better, it's probably time to break up," added Smith.

3. You're over them

This one might seem obvious, but it might be more difficult to recognize than it seems. It could look like choosing to hang out with your friends over your partner, Ziegler told me.

But that could become more serious, Smith said, to the extent that "you're beginning to disregard their feelings because you're exhausted by them, or finding it difficult to care."

That's a pretty good sign it's time to break up, especially if you "no longer want to support your partner emotionally or have sex with them," Smith added.

4. The conversation well has dried up

If you run out of things to talk about, "or don't find what they have to say all that interesting, your relationship may have run its course," Smith told me.

On that note, you might find yourself dissatisfied with your partner's interests and hobbies, Ziegler told me. "A partnership is togetherness," Ziegler said, and "if you find yourself unable to partake in your SO's hobbies or vice versa, it's time to rethink this courtship and part ways."

5. You're fighting for no reason

If you're "finding it increasingly difficult to see the good in them, and you often find yourself seeking out conflict, or rehashing the same fights over and over," it's time to take a hard look at your relationship, Smith said.

She added this nugget of wisdom: "The reality is, if there is more bad than good in your relationship, there is probably something much better out there waiting for you."