

A photograph of a woman in a pink wedding dress and red shoes, holding a bouquet of red roses. A red balloon is on the ground to the left. The text 'SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?' is overlaid on the image.

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

As St. Valentine's Day arrives, we are thinking of what to buy our dear one, planning a girls' night out, or finding the prettiest little red dress for the "red and black" party happening next door. But, while some are focusing on February 14, others are thinking more about the actual relationship they are in — perhaps playing an internal tennis match as to whether or not the person they are with is actually right for them. It is difficult to be 100 percent certain, and there are things that may happen within the relationship that can cast a shadow of doubt on its viability. However, there are signs that things are going the right way and others that indicate the opposite. **By Mira Khreino**



SIGNS YOU SHOULD STAY

- He/she builds you up and gives you self-confidence. They help you see your strengths and support you in your beliefs. They propel you to achieve the things you want to and are happy to see you excel; they make you see your wings.
- They are your number one fan! They speak highly about you to their friends and family. They are proud to be your partner, and you are proud being theirs.
- You can be your true self around them. You don't have to put up a front to please them, and you don't feel like you need to tone down your emotions. You feel loved and accepted for who you are, and do not try to hide aspects of yourself or your life from them.
- They make you feel secure enough to expose the more vulnerable and fragile sides of yourself. You feel comfortable enough to cry in front of them, and they usually know how to support you in the way you need to be supported.
- They give you space and time to vent when you are upset. They do not get annoyed that you're letting off steam. Their main concern is your happiness and if they can help ease any upset, they will try to do so.
- They inspire you to reach your full potential and to go further than where you are now. They have faith in you and nurture the faith you have in yourself. You become better when you are with them, not (only) for their sake, but for yours as well.
- He/she is there for you in times of need and cares about your wellbeing. They want to support you through the rough times, rain or shine, day or night, whether they're having a good or bad day.
- You feel stronger and better equipped to deal with life's challenges with them by your side.
- You are happy when you are with them and when thinking about them. They are a ray of light in your life. The happy times spent together far outweigh the struggles; even though there may be conflict, those fights are resolved fairly and you can both move on beyond them.
- You make time for each other, even on busy days. That may mean a phone call or a quick catch up, but that time is always there. You do not feel like an after-thought.
- You are excited to see each other and look forward to spending time together.
- You love them for who they are, not for what they have or own. You foresee your love weathering the difficulties of life and carrying you through the rough roads ahead.
- You plan for a future together, from going to an event a month away to living together and raising a family. You have a solid enough grounding in the relationship to plan six months ahead without feeling fearful that the relationship could fall apart before those plans are fulfilled.
- You feel they are your equal. He/she gets you! They have your speed, wit, and your intelligence. They laugh at your jokes and you find them interesting and stimulating.

“You feel stronger and better equipped to deal with life’s challenges with them by your side”



- They share their emotions with you so you are not the only one sharing your feelings. Their emotional expression is not only a reaction to what you have said or done, but independent of both. (A note to bear in mind here: some men find emotional expression very difficult and this can be very frustrating for women. We may interpret it as a sign of nonchalant disregard. However, it may be a genuine sign of shyness or strict upbringing. If so, then reassure him by letting him know that you like hearing how he feels about you. This may give him the confidence to take more initiative in emotional expression and share his feeling more candidly.)
- They make sacrifices for you and you are happy to make sacrifices for them, such as holiday plans or even moving to another city.
- You are considerate of each other's likes and dislikes, and take each other's sensitivities into account.
- You feel included in their life, present and future. They let you know about their plans and share stories about their experiences with you.
- You feel he/she treats you well. Though you may have your ups and downs, you believe they are trying their best to be a good partner to you and are trying to understand things from your point of view.
- You think about them when you are not together. You remember important dates like their birthday or your anniversary or other dates that are important to him/her.
- Even when un-groomed and scruffy, you still find them attractive. Your opinion of them does not change according to how they look physically.

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- You naturally want to include them in plans with your friends and your family, and you enjoy having them around in a social setting (and try to help everyone get along).
- They affect you in a positive way. You feel they have a beneficial impact on you and you like the person you are when you are with them. You encourage positive qualities in each other, including kindness, compassion, and understanding.
- You understand each other's mutual needs and respect the other person's needs even if they differ from yours (such as going to the gym or praying).
- You share the same values and know you are on the same page with regards to the fundamentals of life. You both share a vision on how you would like to live. There are, of course, compromises in every relationship, but the relationship needs due consideration if there are conflicting fundamentals. (For example, one person wants to live a health conscious, slow-paced life in the countryside, and the other wants to live a hectic, fast-paced life in the hustle and bustle of the city.)



- You both understand that people are different; one person may be messier than the other or a little more disorganized. You do not try to change each other, but try to work together to make things easier to tolerate.
- You truly miss each other when you are not around each other and look forward to seeing each other. When the working day is done, there's a sense of relief, not because work is over, but because you will be able to take comfort in your partner's presence.
- You want to share your stories and problems with them. When something happens, be it good or bad, they are the first person you think of speaking to and sharing your experience with. You trust their opinion and enjoy feeling that they are there to support or rejoice with you.
- They are close to your family, make an effort with them, and ensure that the relationship between you and their family runs smoothly. They also put in effort with your friends and support your relationships with them.
- He/she has a good relationship with their family, including their parents and siblings. There is mutual respect and they cherish their family. (Remember, this is their blueprint!)
- You've seen them at their worst and that is something you are willing to deal with. Not change, but accommodate. Trying to change someone will only cause stress and friction and contribute to existing frustration about the other's "intolerable" bad habits.
- You feel comfortable in the relationship even when you are not together. You are not consumed with worry about their whereabouts or what they are doing.

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- They understand that doing everything together all the time is unhealthy and encourage personal space in order for both of you to flourish and grow; you both explore your own hobbies and interests, independent of the relationship. (This makes for more interesting interaction between partners and nurtures independent identities. A comfortable balance between spending time together and spending time apart needs to be struck.)
- They make you feel special and loved. After the honeymoon period of the relationship is over, they are still as kind and chivalrous as ever, helping you out, opening doors for you, and putting your coat on.



SIGNS YOU SHOULD GO

- Your partner seeks to control your behavior. They tell you what to do or wear or how to behave. They tell you who your friends should or should not be. They are always right and you are always wrong in their eyes.
- They manipulate your emotions to get what they want. You don't feel equal in the partnership and sense that they are always trying to get the upper hand in the relationship.
- They judge you or compare you to others; they are critical of your every action and don't quite understand your individuality.
- They sometimes put you down to lift themselves up, and they seek to make you feel inferior in order to feel superior. They sabotage your self-confidence in an attempt to gain self-esteem.
- He/she takes you for granted or expects you to always be loving, irrespective of their behavior towards you.
- They play games. You don't feel that they are emotionally mature and they don't make you feel secure in the relationship.
- You feel as though they are hampering or restricting your personal growth, pursuits, or interests.
- They leave you to do all the legwork in the relationship instead of bringing their own share to the table. You are the only one that initiates plans, has friendships, and contributes in the social arena.

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- They either rush into a marriage proposal from the first week or wait years to commit. Both sides of the spectrum raise concern, and you should ask, “Why the rush? We hardly know each other!” or “Why the delay? What are your intentions here?”
- They only want to be there for you in good times and then disappear in bad times. Be wary!
- They say one thing and do another. This not only includes them telling you they will do something and not sticking to their word (which is in itself very frustrating). It can also mean saying he/she cares about you and reciting poetic nothings in your ear, but not acting in a way to back up those romantic words. They say they love you and yet act in a very inconsiderate and selfish way.



SIGNS YOU SHOULD RUN

- If you do not want them to meet your friends or family, chances are you do not feel they are right for you. You may be ashamed of them or you may feel insecure in the relationship and be subconsciously preventing the meeting. You will often find excuses to stall any encounter.
- You do not like the person you become when you are with them. Are you becoming jealous, anxious, stressed, or lazy? If so, ask yourself if these are qualities you value or negative traits you would rather discard.
- If you have a bad gut feeling, listen to it! If you feel they are too clingy and require your attention all the time, take note! Chances are that kind of quality will not change over time.
- They make you sad more often than they make you happy. Whenever you think of them, you feel worried, stressed, scared, or even angry — anything but happy. When you're with them, you argue more often than not. While you may have had happy times in the past, those days seem long gone.
- You don't feel excited to see them; instead, you feel bored and nonchalant. Sometimes, you would rather do something else altogether.
- You can't be yourself around them. You feel like you constantly need to change to fit their idea of what you should be like.

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We are all looking for different things in our relationships. Some of us may admire a quality in someone that others may despise. No one is perfect, and no one will fit the ideal image that you create in your mind. Every relationship has its hurdles and its struggles, but those hardships should be outweighed by what that relationship means to you and the positives it contributes to your life. Above all, your partner should make you feel loved and cared for, special and cherished, trusted and respected, valued and appreciated. Remember — your life is yours to live. The friends you surround yourself with, the work you do, the hobbies you pursue, and the partner you pick are all a matter of choice. Follow your heart and choose what makes you happy! ■