



# **Should I End This Relationship?**

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By Dr. Margaret Paul

In the many years I've been counseling, thousands of couples have come to me wondering if they should end their relationship. Most of these people were in love at one point but are now miserable with each other, or one partner is miserable with the other. Generally, they don't know what the real problem is. They know what they don't like about the other person. They know they can't communicate about what is important to them. They know they fight about money or sex or time or chores or hundreds of other things, or they ignore the problems and are distant. What they don't know is what the REAL problem is.

Leaving a relationship before knowing what the real problem is, is generally a waste of time (aside from domestic violence) - especially if you eventually want to be in another relationship.

The reason it's a waste of time is because whatever you are doing to create your unhappiness, you are not going to stop doing just because you leave the relationship. You take yourself with you when you leave, and unless you heal your part of the relationship problem, you will continue to behave in ways that eventually destroys relationships.

You might be surprised to learn that the time to leave a relationship is NOT when you are miserable, but rather when you are happy, joyful and peaceful. When you have learned how to make yourself happy and bring yourself peace and joy, and if your partner is still distance, angry, needy, disconnected, resistant, unloving, or acting out addictively - then it may be time to leave if that is what you want.

When I work with couples, I help each partner learn - through the practice of Inner Bonding - how to take full, 100% responsibility for their own feelings and needs. Obviously, if both people are behaving in ways that bring themselves joy, they will have a lot of love to share with each other. As long as they are stuck believing that their unhappiness is the other person's fault, they are being victims. As victims they want to control the other person and get them to behave the way they want them to behave. As victims, they are afraid of being rejected or controlled, and are behaving in ways to protect themselves from what they fear. All the ways they are trying to have

control over not being rejected or controlled are creating the relationship problems.

Until you become aware of how you are being a victim and how you are trying to control your partner - and you are successful in taking care of your own feelings and needs - there is no point in leaving.

Most people who are unhappy in their relationship are reactors. They are reacting to the other person's controlling behavior with their own controlling behavior. For example:

- When Jacob criticizes her, Hannah shuts down. When Hannah shuts down, Jacob criticizes.
- When Sally gets angry at Joe, Joe defends, lectures and explains himself. When Joe lectures, Sally gets angry and resistant.
- When Robert is demanding, Ingrid gives herself up to comply with Robert's demands. The more Ingrid complies, the more Robert demands.
- When Michele complains, Hugh resists. The more Hugh resist, the more Michele complains.
- When Craig acts like an irresponsible child, Karen becomes parental and judgmental. The more Karen is parental and judgmental, the more Craig is resistant and irresponsible.

Each of these people are reacting in controlling ways, rather than acting in ways that take loving care of themselves. Both people are participating in creating a negative circle. Generally, they then blame the other for their own reaction: "If you wouldn't criticize, then I wouldn't withdraw." "Well, if you wouldn't withdraw, then I wouldn't criticize." "If you weren't so resistant, I wouldn't get angry." "If you weren't so angry, I wouldn't resist."

If they were to consistently practice Inner Bonding and learn to act in loving ways toward themselves rather than react in controlling ways toward their partner, then:

- When Jacob criticized, Hannah might speak up for herself instead of shutting down, saying something like, "Jacob, I don't like being criticized. I'm not willing to have this discussion until we can be open with each other." When Hannah shut down, Jacob

could be curious instead of critical, saying something like, "Honey, you must have a good reason for withdrawing from me. Do you want to talk about it?"

- When Sally got angry, Joe could disengage from the conversation instead of trying to talk her out of her feelings. He would give up trying to have control over Sally's anger and how she sees him and take care of himself. When Joe tried to control Sally with his lecturing and explaining, instead of trying to control him with her anger, Sally could speak up for herself, telling Joe that she doesn't like it when he tries to talk her out of her feelings.

There is no point in leaving a relationship until you have learned to act in ways that are loving to yourself and your partner, instead of reacting in controlling and resistant ways. Leaving only delays this learning until your next relationship. Why not learn and practice the Inner Bonding process before giving up on your relationship?

## **To End or Not to End Your Relationship**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Vanessa, 30 years old, is struggling with whether or not to end her six-year marriage. The answer is not at all clear to her.

Vanessa and Jon have a "good" marriage. They are kind and caring with each other. They enjoy many of the same things. So why is Vanessa in such turmoil over whether to stay or leave?

The problem is that Vanessa is very lonely with Jon. They are good friends, but they are not emotionally intimate. Jon has no desire to share any of his feelings with Vanessa, nor does he have any desire to understand Vanessa's feelings. He is content to keep everything on the surface, while Vanessa wants a deeper emotional connection.

Since they have many good things in their marriage, Vanessa has decided to try marriage counseling, and Jon has agreed. Counseling or not, there is only one thing that can save this marriage - Jon and

Vanessa shifting out of their intent to protect against pain and into an intent to learn about what is loving to themselves and each other.

Jon's intent has always been to protect against pain rather than to learn about being loving to himself and others. He has done this by numbing out his feelings with marijuana and work. Jon's choice to continue to protect against pain or to begin to open to learning from his feelings will determine the outcome of the counseling.

Vanessa, too, has operated with the intent to protect against pain. She has ignored her own feelings and been a "good" wife, submerging her own needs to comply with what Jon wanted. But at some point, she shifted her intent to learning about what is loving to herself, and now she realizes she cannot continue in an emotionally disconnected marriage.

The issues in your relationship may be about emotional distance, lack of passion, sexual problems, constant fighting, emotional abuse, (if there is physical abuse, then you must find a way to leave), or being used financially. There may be control and resistance occurring around many different issues. Yet the underlying issue is a lack of open and caring communication. And open communication only occurs when both people have a deep intention to learn about their feelings, fears, limiting beliefs, and resulting unloving behavior. If one or both people in a relationship are closed to learning about themselves and each other, the relationship will not heal.

If you are thinking about leaving your relationship, first think about your own intent. Are you open to learning about your feelings, beliefs and behavior? Or, are you devoted to protecting against pain with anger, withdrawal, resistance or caretaking? Are you avoiding your feelings with substances and activities, or are you opening to learning from your feelings and to taking responsibility for them? Are you willing learn and practice the Inner Bonding process? The first thing you need to do is deal with your own intent.

Once you are open to learning for a number of months, and really doing your Inner Bonding work, then re-evaluate your relationship. Has anything changed? Is your partner more or less open to you? Are you talking more and fighting or withdrawing less?

If things are not getting better or are getting worse, you may want to ask your partner if he or she is willing to do some healing work with you - through counseling, workshops, and reading books together. If

your partner refuses to embark on a learning journey with you, then you need to either fully accept it as it is and continue to learn to take responsibility for your own happiness, or leave the relationship.

Although it may not become the relationship you want it to be unless both of you are open to learning, much change can come about through one person doing his or her Inner Bonding work.

If one or both partners remain in the intent to protect, the relationship will not heal. Yet many relationships can be healed when at least one person is deeply devoted to learning about loving themselves and their partner.

### **Too Easy To Leave**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Katheryn and Mathew, both in their 50's, have been together for two years. Both have been previously married and divorced. When they met, they fell madly in love, which lasted for a few months. Then the conflicts started.

Both Katheryn and Mathew left their marriages because they were with partners who were completely unwilling to open to learning in conflict. Both Katheryn and Mathew wanted to find a partner who would learn and grow with them. They found each other at a personal growth seminar.

However, each time a conflict occurs, which is often at this point in their relationship, they both threaten to leave. Katheryn is consistently yelling, "I've had it! I'm leaving!" while Mathew yells, "Why don't you just leave!" They each have a foot out the door.

Katheryn and Mathew are stuck in a typical control-resist relationship system. Katheryn wants to leave because she is so frustrated by Mathew's constant withdrawal and resistance, while Mathew wants to leave because he can't stand Katheryn's constant attempts to control him and make him responsible for her feelings.

Leaving is a waste of time for Katheryn and Mathew. Actually, these two people have exactly what they asked for – someone to learn and grow with. Both Katheryn and Mathew are willing to learn and explore at some point after the conflict. Each are slowly becoming more aware of their end of their dysfunctional relationship system. If they leave, they have no one to come up against, no one who triggers their issues, so their issues will not be addressed until they are in another relationship. Then the same issues will surface.

The people I work with often believe that it would be easier to start over with someone else, or easier to be alone. I assure them that, in my experience, all learning and growing relationships are very challenging – that all couples who desire to create a really wonderful and loving relationship have to go through the trenches of healing their woundedness within the relationship. It may be easier to be alone, but it's lonely and the major relationship issues never get healed.

If you are a person who deeply desires to continue your emotional and spiritual growth, and you are with a partner who also desires this, than DON'T LEAVE. No matter how bad the fights get or the distance gets – except if there is continued physical violence - keep at it. It's too easy to leave, too easy to blame the other person, too easy to miss the incredible opportunity that relationships provide for healing and growth.

It's especially important to hang in there when children are involved. I'm not saying to stay just for the children. If you are with a physically violent partner, or a partner who has no desire to take any personal responsibility, or a substance abuser who has no desire to heal from his or her addiction, then you may need to leave. But if you have a partner who is on a growth path, who is willing to explore with you, who is willing to have counseling with you, who is willing to learn to take responsibility for him or herself, *then leaving is not the answer*. No matter how difficult things get at times, you have a responsibility to yourself, your partner, your family, as well as to the whole of humanity to do the learning you came to this planet to do.

If you are fortunate enough to be with a partner who is, at least at some of the time, opens to learning with you, you are fortunate indeed. The relationship will take you to the depths of your dark side and to the heights of your ability to love. It will take you where you need to go, so don't give up just because it's so hard. The challenge is to keep going within, connecting with your feelings and your inner

wisdom, and learning what it means to move beyond control, resistance, punishing the other, threats and bullying, blame, being a victim, and beyond compliance.

Even if you think that you are open and your partner isn't, it would be in your highest good to stay in the relationship until you are able to remain loving to yourself and your partner no matter what your partner is doing. As long as you are triggered by your partner's behavior, your healing is not complete and there is no point in leaving. If you reach a point where you are no longer triggered by your partner's behavior, you might discover that your partner has also changed, even though you believed he or she was not open to learning and growing. If your partner remains closed and there is really nothing more for you to learn, then it might be time for you to leave.

I hope you get both feet in there and do your inner work before thinking about leaving. Don't waste this opportunity to evolve your soul in love.

## **5 Reasons Why You Might Want to End Your Relationship**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

When I married my ex-husband in 1963, I was determined to create a stable, loving relationship. I wanted an intact family where we could raise our children and share the joys of our grandchildren.

We did raise our children together, but ended the marriage after 30 years. We do get to share the joys of our grandchildren, but as friends rather than partners.

Through the process of our difficult marriage, and my 43 years of counseling individuals and couples, I learned much about why it is better for some relationships to end.

### **Physical and/or Verbal Abuse**

If there is physical abuse or severe verbal abuse, this relationship should end. It is never loving to yourself to stay in a relationship that is physically dangerous to you or to your children. Nor is it loving to

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Margaret Paul, Ph.D., Inner Bonding® Educational Technologies, Inc.



yourself or your family for you to be consistently subjected to intense, heartbreaking verbal abuse.

Everyone deserves to be loved and supported for who they are, and if you are with a partner who cannot do this, then you need to love and support yourself enough to not be subjected to abuse.

## **Addictions**

Substance addictions such as alcohol or drugs that interfere with the ability of you and your partner to connect with each other can cause much loneliness and heartbreak. As much as you and your partner might love each other, you deserve to be with someone whose love is reliable.

Process addictions, such as a gambling addiction that threatens your financial security, or a sexual addiction (porn, affairs) lead to much heartbreak and lack of trust. Affairs can also lead to physical danger, due to sexually transmitted diseases. Unless your partner wants to heal these addictions and is receiving help, you will continue to suffer and be at the mercy of the addictions.

## **Personality Disorder**

While personality disorders such as Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) or Borderline Personal Disorder (BPD) can be healed, it takes much motivation on the part of the person with the disorder to heal it. If there is no motivation to heal, then being at the other end of the anger, neediness, control issues and crazy-making may not be healthy for you. Expecting someone to change if they are not receiving intensive help is completely unrealistic - you will wait forever.

## **Growing Apart**

People are attracted at their common level of woundedness or their common level of health. If you and your partner were both abandoning yourselves when you met, and if you went on a healing and growth path but your partner didn't, then it is likely that you have grown apart.

This is what happened in my marriage. As I learned and healed, our formerly codependent system shifted and I was no longer willing to be a caretaker. Our relationship was based on the caretaker/taker codependent system, so when I shifted the system, we stopped being

able to connect on the wounded level on which we previously connected. When our relationship reached a place where there was no more learning and growth occurring, and no connection between us, it was time to move on.

### **No Learning or Growth**

One of the great values of relationships is being able to heal, learn and grow emotionally and spiritually with each other. When one partner is not available to learn and grow, the relationship may become stagnant. At the beginning, when there is passion and excitement, it might not be evident that learning and growth is not a priority, but as time goes on you might find yourself feeling sad that you cannot share the excitement of learning and growth with your partner. Sometimes, a partner who is not interested in learning can still be supportive of the other continuing to learn and grow with others, but if your partner is threatened by your learning and growth then it might be time to leave.

I always encourage people to do their own inner work before leaving a marriage, as we take ourselves with us and often create the very same dysfunctional relationship next time. The time to leave is when you are happy within, due to taking loving care of yourself, but you find that your partner is either not willing or not interested in taking responsibility for himself or herself.