

Can you make your partner fall in love with you again?

You've seen the signs that your relationship is in trouble, or maybe your partner's told you so point blank. In which case, you're probably feeling shocked to the core, and can barely think straight or sleep at night. You might cry, or want to shout and bang your fist on the table. Perhaps you're doing all you can to convince your partner that they've got it wrong. Surely, deep down, he or she does still love you? "They're just confused", you might think.

Under these circumstances, I totally understand if you're looking for an easy way to 'make' him or her see that they do still love you.

However, for various reasons, this may be the wake-up call you needed. The pain of the loss of security can offer you the opportunity to learn from what's happened. It's a chance to grow, move on and become stronger and wiser - whether that's together or separately. Yes, I totally understand that can hurt, but facing the facts head on really can reduce your anxiety.

I want you to be loved, cared for, accepted and validated. But not at the expense of who you really are! I don't want you to blame yourself, or blame your partner, or think that you're not good enough or don't deserve to be loved. Instead, I want to encourage you to become more of who you already are, and recognise what you already bring to this world.

It's the latter two that really matter, though. So I'm going to assume that your partner is truly someone who deserves your love. And that you're not putting or keeping yourself in a position where you're going to be used or abused.

As Oprah Winfrey says - you being here is enough: "That sperm hit that egg!" Think about the odds of that!

We'll approach this from the assumption that your relationship does have a fighting chance, and that you're willing to do whatever's necessary to save it. (Within reason!)

So let's get started with the best relationship advice I can possibly give you.

But first, a note of warning...

In your present state of mind, you may be tempted to dismiss much of what I say. This won't help you! So be on the look-out for any defensive thoughts and behaviours, for example:

- Telling yourself that it's perhaps not as bad as you thought after all
- Finding reasons why this all can't really be happening, and withdrawing from the truth
- Blaming everyone else
- Pretending to yourself that you're actually not that bothered if you do split up (because even if you were prepared for the ending and could see the benefits of a breakup, it'll still affect you emotionally!)

So, since you only have control over yourself (and not your partner), let's look at what's going on for you. There's no shame, guilt or prejudice of any kind here. See me as your very best friend, with the courage to lovingly tell you how it really is - because nobody else will.

It's not going to be easy and I suspect what I say won't really be what you want to hear. But hey... you've probably hit rock bottom already - so the only way is up! And taking stock right now is fundamental to you being able to climb out of that pit.

First of all, let's do a reality check...

Can your relationship ever be the same again?

You may well remember how it felt when you first fell in love. You were probably utterly infatuated by your boy/girlfriend, and passionately in love. Everything you did, thought about, wanted to have, felt you needed and even craved would have involved your partner. (Obsession and addiction come to mind!)

[Watch this TED talk to learn more.](#)

That heady mixture of emotions is intoxicating (almost literally!) - while it lasts. Let's face it, though - it's not necessarily conducive to a healthy, long-term relationship. Whilst in the grip of this 'condition', your emotional brain is in charge. Decisions, on which the longevity of the relationship depends, are made by your emotional brain whilst the logical part is almost as good as switched off.

For some fortunate couples, much of the euphoria remains. For most, though, it wears off over time. And in its place there will be little niggles that can build up gradually to create major marital or relationship problems.

So, can it ever be the same again? I'm afraid the answer is: most probably not. This is in part due to the absence of that initial intoxicating euphoria. But it's also because this current crisis will have changed everything. Your feelings of trust, the way you see your partner and your relationship, and your expectations... all of these will be different now. So, to put it bluntly, you will have to move on from this current situation, in one way or another.

But...

If you're taking this as a learning opportunity (which I strongly encourage you to do) - the benefits are huge! In the future, you'll probably be:

- More cautious
- Less likely to take things for granted
- More aware of what's needed to keep a relationship healthy
- More grateful for what you do have
- More attentive to your partner's needs

Whilst none of these can guarantee you a fairy tale happy-ever-after, they certainly can make you a better partner.

In this guide, we'll be looking at what *you* have control over when it comes to your relationship. It's important to remember as you read

all of this: you can't control your partner or make him or her do anything he/she doesn't want to do.

Great things can happen when you focus on what you *do* want for *yourself*, instead of focusing on what you *don't* want.

And when it comes to saving your relationship, the first thing we need to know is what your role in the decline of your relationship has been. We need to discover if perhaps you've been undermining yourself - whether you were consciously aware of it or not - and how that might have impacted on the relationship. (More on that to come later on.)

I know you're committed to fighting for the survival of your relationship. You're absolutely to be commended for that. And I'm here to help you fulfil that commitment!

What might have happened?

Your current situation could have been triggered by a number of circumstances. However, it's likely to fall under one of two reasons...

1. You've been together for more than a few years...

... and life together has become somewhat humdrum. Routine or overwhelming demands - at work and at home - are taking up much of your attention and energy. Feeling tired, you often just want to switch off and relax when you can.

The problem is that, over time, you may actually have switched off from your partner in the process. (Or the other way around!)

Bit by bit, either one or both of you has taken your eye off the ball, and now your relationship appears to be falling apart. Your partner has lost interest, you've discovered he or she is having an affair, or suddenly you're told: "I don't love you anymore."

OR...

2. You haven't even been together all that long, but you consider yourself to be in a committed intimate relationship...

... yet you're aware that the relationship which you thought was all you'd ever wanted is starting to slip away. Or you've discovered that your partner has been unfaithful.

Either way... boom!

Oh the pain, the pain! It probably feels as if you're hanging by your fingertips on the edge of a cliff.

Hang on in there!

I'm aiming to help you to find the best ways for you to attract your partner's - positive - attention again. For them to *want* to see you again for who you really are, with all your wonderful qualities *and* your flaws. For them to accept you, and - *perhaps* - fall in love with you all over again.

I'm rooting for your success in making some valuable *lasting* changes to help you save and improve your relationship or marriage. I can't and wouldn't want to offer you any flimsy, 'magical' solutions, though. We both know that - unlike what you may read elsewhere - there are no "*fail-safe ways*" to make your partner fall in love with you again.

Is there still hope, though?

Absolutely there is. There's much that you can do to bring about the necessary changes that will help you (re)build a strong, potentially long-term relationship. My advice, though perhaps not always easy, is achievable, with lasting benefits for you and your relationship.

To start with, we're going to deal with one of the biggest obstacles in the path of rekindling love... we're going to get the blame thing out of the way. Later on, we'll look at whether or not you can indeed prevent a breakup, and if it's possible that you've let yourself go (more for your sake than that of your partner!).

Do you blame out of habit or is something really troubling you?

Either way: listen up!

In her talk about blame, Brene Brown says: "Blame is simply the discharging of discomfort and pain".



To repeat what Brene said:

"Blaming is very corrosive in relationships".

That's why we're going to deal with it first. But, just in case you fear I stand in judgement, read on to understand that I really don't...

Why do we find it so easy to blame - everybody else, someone else or ourselves?

When bad things happen to us we become, to a greater or lesser extent, emotional. This is a normal and expected reaction. You're

very likely to feel angry, sad, disappointed, traumatised or hurt. Those feelings - depending on the severity of the situation and your mental state at the time - can trigger your survival system. The more emotional we are, the less nuanced our thinking becomes. It turns black and white, one extreme or the other. That's when blaming becomes all too easy.

Our brain is wired to find fault! Because if we can identify the 'baddie' then in that moment of overwhelm we know how to make ourselves feel safe. *They've* got to sort themselves out, disappear, grovel and apologise, or *we* disappear and *we* are okay. Simple.

Of course, you may well come to regret your reaction later.

Why?

Because your emotional blaming reaction might have...

- landed you in the victim role
- damaged the relationship even more with an out of control reaction
- catapulted your partner into defense mode by attacking them with counter-accusations, accompanied perhaps by some choice words

Whose 'fault' is it really?

If you're blaming your partner

Let's assume for a moment that the two of you *were* happy. Yet, out of the blue, you discover your partner is having or has had an affair (people in happy relationships can be unfaithful too). It's natural that you'd feel devastated, mad with them, and terrified about what it could mean for your relationship. You would very understandably then want to blame your partner.

You'd have every right to feel offended, hurt, let down and want to complain - endlessly - about their behaviour.

But... would accusations, criticisms and attacks solve the problem at such a critical time? No - it would only lead to defensiveness and even more negativity.

Conversely, let's imagine that the two of you have been having issues for some time. You both played a role in that, so who then is to blame? You could point the finger at others (your in-laws, for example), your partner or yourself. But doing so wouldn't solve anything - and in fact it would probably just inflame the situation.

Escalation of the situation would lead to *both* of you becoming increasingly emotional. Neither of you are then able to look at things a little more dispassionately. Nor are you equipped to devise some actionable steps to help you to improve your relationship and grow as a couple.

There's bound to be a pay-off when you blame your partner:

- It stops you from having to trouble yourself with uncomfortable thoughts, feelings and deeds.
- You can dust yourself off and pretend you're squeaky clean.
- You don't feel the need to apologise.
- You don't feel the need to make any uncomfortable changes to yourself.

However, you're now stuck because the situation is likely to stay exactly the same... and probably even get worse.

Fault-finding, blaming and shaming will fail to make your partner fall in love with you again (or the other way around).

If you focus on blame, apologies, grovelling, and waiting for your partner to change, you no longer have control over your own destiny.

You *can* wait for your partner to change, apologise, grovel, and do anything to make you feel better. But at what cost?

- You no longer have control over your own destiny.
- While waiting for him or her to put things right you become increasingly worked up and stressed
- You feel out of control; that's scary!
- You're increasingly struggling with a sense of despair and hopelessness which can lead to depression.
- Blaming prevents you from learning and growing. If there was - sadly - to be a breakup, you wouldn't have taken any learning from this experience. In that case, you may well end up with another unsuitable partner or make the same mistakes all over again.

This is such an ugly outcome and I really wouldn't want that for you. I know you have it within you to take control of your own

thoughts, feelings and actions. It's the only way, as you really don't have the power to make your partner do anything:

- You cannot control their mind or their thoughts, however much you'd like to because maybe you think "they've got 'it' all wrong".
- You cannot change their feelings, even though you may think they shouldn't or needn't feel like they do
- You cannot make them do anything, even if you think they should

And, if you're blaming them - how long would you want to, or could you, hold on to that? All the effort that you'd invest in that... there are so many better ways to direct your energy, if you could just let go of that blame!

It may seem daunting, but at the same time it's refreshing and inspiring to think that you're now in charge of your own destiny.

How to do a self-check and take responsibility

So, reluctantly perhaps, you can own up - you admit you've resorted to blaming and complaining (haven't we all done that at

times?). You're a star for acknowledging that. You're now ready to make some rapid - and lasting - changes.

Start by asking yourself the following challenging questions. Be as honest as you can - I'm not judging you and there's nobody looking over your shoulder!

- Deep down, were you perhaps *wanting* your partner to be wrong?
- Were you *wanting* them to feel humiliated and belittled by way of punishment?
- Were you looking for ways to justify your own behaviour because you consider yourself to be better?
- Were you looking for ways to feel better about yourself because you're eaten up by guilt, self-blame and shame?
- Were you pointing the finger to strengthen your own position - perhaps that of a victim?

If you were resorting to any of these behaviours - regardless of what's happened - I hope you can see that they only make it more unlikely that your partner will fall in love with you again.

So, here are some tips to help you break the pattern of automatically going down the road of blaming and shaming...

How to move from fault-finding to accountability

10 Tips to help you become a more considerate, empathetic partner

1. Don't be drawn into a discussion about whatever's happened until you've calmed down.
2. Stay calm and at least be considerate. There's no place for meanness in a relationship. You make mistakes, so does your partner.
3. Give your partner the benefit of the doubt. You might be wrong: perhaps you haven't seen the whole picture and you've jumped to conclusions
4. To help you consider alternative explanations, take a look at their behaviour from different angles - there are likely to be several different reasons why they might have done X, Y or Z.
5. Avoid at all costs any "Yes, you did" and "No, you didn't" arguments.

6. During an adult conversation, aim to find out whether your partner acted with full knowledge of the potential consequences of their actions.
7. Aim to find out if they intended to hurt you. If they did, take your time to consider what that means for the health of your relationship.
8. Discuss what could possibly have been the reason for their behaviour.
9. Discuss whether whatever they did or didn't do could have been avoided, and what you could both do to help prevent it from happening again in the future.
10. Consider - over time - whether the problem is short-term and can be resolved, or indeed has been a problem or pattern of behaviour for a long time (you might find it helps to [discuss this with a counsellor](#). See box below.)

All of these measures will help the two of you practice healthy ways of dealing with smaller and larger problems together.

Oh and one last thing...

Don't be tempted to tell your family all about how bad your partner has been. If the two of you have made up, they're likely to still hold it against him or her!

Perhaps it's not your partner you blame...

...for everything that's wrong in the relationship, but yourself. What if that's become your habit?

Should you blame yourself?

In a word, no! (Well, unless you've done something drastic to harm your relationship, like have an affair. But even so - it's still not really about *blame*... it's more about taking responsibility for your behaviour.)

We are all as individual as the stars in the sky. That includes you! There is no-one else with the same potential, capacity, talents and resources with which you've come into this world.

I therefore really hope I can help you to stop blaming yourself, because...

- That too can put you in the victim role.
- It can also leave you feeling needlessly powerless.

- You'd only pile on more shame and guilt...
- ... leading to further feelings of failure and worthlessness.
- You'd become more emotional, thus compromising your ability to take positive and *effective* action.

Remember? The more emotional we are as human beings, the less we can think straight. An old part of your brain - involved in fight, flight or freeze - takes charge, leading to all or nothing, black or white thinking. You're more likely to make nonsensical, spur-of-the-moment decisions when your emotions are running high. Not to mention spitting out things that you later regret!

Why waste your precious energy on undermining yourself? I can totally understand if you're feeling anxious after the revelation that your relationship is in danger. But you're not going to save your relationship or marriage by blaming yourself.

You stand the best possible chance of creating positive changes and helping your partner fall in love with you again by...

- Owning your responsibility.
- Being accountable for your own thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- Engaging your partner in an open and honest conversation

- Deciding which problems can be solved and acting on them
(not to just please your partner, but more so yourself!)

It may take some time for your partner to see you in a different light. But moving away from blaming and replacing it with taking responsibility removes a tonne of stress from your relationship. It can be hugely inspiring. It can potentially transform your relationship when you stop berating your partner or pinning all the troubles on yourself.

Are you habitually resorting to beating yourself up, or suffering from low self-esteem?

You don't have to be so hard on yourself! Click the link for my article on [how to build your self-esteem](#). It's full of encouraging tips and advice to help you develop more resilient emotional health.

What has happened to you personally?

Take a couple of deep breaths, read the following list and really take note of your immediate reaction to the points raised.

I'm going to come back to each point separately. So dare to be honest with yourself - there's nobody watching over your shoulder....



Before you read on - keep this saying in mind! You played a role in your relationship problems (we play a role in every relationship we have!). But had your partner been different, your role would have been different too. Now it's time to take stock - simple, but not easy.

12 Ways your personal problems may have impacted on the relationship

1. You've stopped taking pride - and joy - in your appearance, or at least not bothered as much as you used to when you first met
2. You've fallen into the trap of constantly nagging and complaining (regardless of the rights or wrongs)
3. You're no longer making the effort to show an interest in your partner's well-being, work, friends or hobbies
4. You've been too demanding or too needy. If you're really honest with yourself, it's been all about you
5. You've got a personal problem - your partner knew and accepted that. Maybe you haven't been entirely honest about it. Perhaps you promised you'd be okay, you'd work on it, etc, but in truth, you've given up on it
6. You stayed in the relationship with a partner who is unavailable (more on this to come)

7. You've never actually taken the time to understand what's really needed to keep a relationship going
8. You've lost interest in life in general - you're just living from day to day. You may or may not be depressed - either way, it's not helping your relationship
9. You're suffering from an addiction and therefore don't have the capacity to fully love your partner or spouse, because your first love is the substance you're craving
10. You've closed yourself off and built a wall around yourself, fearing you could love too much and risk getting hurt (again)
11. You've lost yourself in the process of trying to please your partner
12. You suffer from (unexplained) mood swings

Printable worksheet

[Click this link to download the list as a worksheet.](#)

Oh, and this is all assuming that you haven't (or your partner hasn't) been unfaithful!

Again, I'm not judging you, and I don't want you to judge yourself. Just be honest with yourself. When you are, you give yourself the

opportunity to learn and move forward. You also stand a much better chance of figuring out the best way to solve this current marital or relationship problem too.

I understand, though, if you're a bit miffed at the prospect of spending time on improving *yourself*! Why would I give such advice, when you don't necessarily consider yourself to be the problem? (Know that as a therapist I don't see anybody as a 'problem'. We can all be trapped in behaviours that are less than helpful in any situation, let alone a relationship.)

Here's why...

You can bend over backwards to try and be the person you think your partner wants you to be. But then what, if he or she rejects you after all? You'll have done all you can to get them to love you, but you'll have lost yourself in the process.

Or, you can take your partner and your relationship for granted, and forget to devote the necessary time and energy to creating a healthy, happy and fulfilling partnership for the two of you.

Either way, your relationship is going to be in trouble!

It's important for you to blossom as lovable person in your own right - someone you yourself feel proud of. Then, at night as you

lay your head on the pillow, you'll feel happy and contented with who you are and what you've achieved that day.

Alongside reading my advice here, it can also be useful to ask the people closest to you for their opinions too. Ask them to be honest with you - even if they're not that skillful when it comes to handling delicate situations. They'll know things about you that you don't know yourself. Be prepared to carefully consider what they're telling you, without becoming unnecessarily defensive.

But!

Make sure you choose carefully who you ask. You know who has your best interests at heart - so don't ask anyone that you know will be deliberately unkind or critical to you, to suit their own ends.

Being the best you that you can be

The most helpful thing that you can do is to become the absolute best version of yourself that you can be - whatever that means for you. When you're feeling confident, strong and secure, you'll be much more likely to be able to handle whatever comes your way. If it ends up that your partner has fallen out of love with you, you'll be in a pretty good position to pick yourself up, dust yourself off and be ready for a new relationship, whenever it might come along.

Or, if you spend a little time on improving yourself, perhaps the fog will lift and your partner will remember all the reasons that he or she fell in love with you in the first place.

So, instead of telling you what your partner might be thinking or doing (which, let's face it, is impossible... there are a million variables there!), I want to help you with your own journey. Here goes...

Advice and specific actions to save a relationship

As I'm writing this, I'm imagining that you're sitting across the table from me. I'm willing you to get the most from this guide and to succeed in reigniting love, or finding new love elsewhere (a relationship can't always be saved).

Scan the following points, then choose the one that most speaks to you and follow the advice...

1. Have you stopped taking pride in your appearance?

This is a hard one, because ideally your partner should love you unconditionally, shouldn't they? If they've accused you of letting yourself go, then I can understand you'd balk at the notion that you're unlovable because of your appearance. And maybe you have let yourself go a little because life happened and there are more important demands on your time - work, the kids, chores, money problems, etc. Or maybe you're stressed to the eyeballs, and potentially suffering from depression, anxiety or an addiction. All of that could lead to you not being the slightest bit interested in what you look like! (We'll cover the mental health problems later.)

So, let's not look at the superficial stuff (clothes, hair, personal hygiene etc.) Instead, let's consider a more helpful angle.

As human beings, we're much more attracted to people who appear to be vibrant and positive, regardless of their circumstances. Cast your mind over your friends, colleagues and family. Who do you look forward to seeing and spending time with? Who do you try to avoid - and why?

So, yes, you may have put on weight and grown older; your time and energy may have been taken up with life's dramas (I've certainly had times like that). The question is, though - has that stood in the way of you remaining positive and solution-focused? Or are you still forward-looking and energised (save for the time you needed to adjust to a new and perhaps even dire situation)?

Of course, I wouldn't want you to paint on a smile and pretend all is well all the time. That's not helpful either! So I hope that, regardless of your appearance, you have people around you who accept and love you unconditionally for who you are.

However hard your life might be, be sure to take good care of yourself - most importantly for your own sake.

Your personal action plan

Dare to take a proper look at yourself - and see if you can reasonably expect more from yourself. Weight, age, health, finances and whatever life throws at you need not stand in the way of you looking your best. This is primarily for your own benefit, to make you feel better about yourself. If your partner is pleasantly surprised - that's an added bonus!

2. Have you fallen into the trap of constantly nagging and complaining?

You may not even have realised how much your conversations are peppered with negativity. Perhaps, without consciously realising it, you've increasingly succumbed to nagging, constantly carping on about what your partner should and shouldn't be doing, and just generally being crabby. This can play a big role in online relationships too. If this is a habit of yours, I know - as an experienced couple counsellor - that you're likely to have complained about the same things over and over again. And I doubt that it's had any positive or lasting effect.

I really do understand how easy it is to fall into that trap. However, if constantly harping on isn't working, why continue in the same vein? It's time for a fresh approach.

I can guarantee your negativity won't make your other half into a better partner or spouse. And it certainly doesn't make you more lovable. Here's the best relationship advice to fix that nagging problem:

Your personal action plan

Learn to challenge your partner effectively - take a look at my page on [how to stop arguing](#).

Get expert help with your particular relationship problems - [CLICK HERE](#) for further information.

3. Have you truly been taking a keen interest in your partner's work, hobbies and friends?

It's all too easy to switch off from whatever your partner's talking about if you've no interest in the subject and you've heard it all before, or you're stressed with too many other things taking up your time and attention.

It's possible that your partner's interests don't appeal to you. However, it's essential for the survival of your relationship that you *do* take an active interest in your partner's experiences, thoughts and feelings. By doing this, you truly get to know and understand them.

Remember those early conversations when you first met? You've both changed since then. Every experience, every conversation, every article or book you read, every person you meet... all of these

things cause a change - however small - in how you both look at the world.

Your personal action plan

Here are 3 ways to be actively involved with your partner even if the subject doesn't interest you:

1. Be open to learning something new - not only about your partner, but about things in general. Gaining knowledge makes you more interesting, can take you out of your comfort zone and keeps your brain active and alive.
2. Split the subject into parts - find at least one aspect of their experience you can relate to. For example - if your partner is interested in politics and you aren't, you can show an interest in who they meet day to day and what kinds of people they are. Or, if your partner is interested in sports, you can discover how that passion developed, how they explored it as a child, what their parents thought about it, what they were good at and not so good at during different periods of their life - and so on.

3. Ask questions. Ask why, what, how, when and who. Listen intently. Show a true interest in your partner's answers. Explore what they say, and take the time to understand what they've done, what they've enjoyed, what wasn't so great etc. Ask and ask again - go a little deeper with each question... but don't interrogate them! The idea is to have a two-way conversation in which your partner can feel truly heard and valued in their own right.

4. Have you been too demanding and needy?

If you grab all the attention - for whatever reason - you leave no space for your partner. He or she also needs to be able to express their feelings, wishes, needs, dreams and experiences. They too need to have the time and the freedom to develop themselves. He or she isn't just there for your happiness.

Your personal action plan

Here are 3 things you can do to check if you're too demanding and needy:

1. Keep tabs on how much time your needs and wants are taking up in your relationship (for mental health problems, see #5

below)

2. Check that your fears and trepidations aren't getting in the way of you both enjoying rich social lives
3. Check that you're not quickly taking over or butting in when your partner is trying to talk

Giving and receiving attention in balance is what keeps relationships alive and well - and never more so than in an intimate relationship..

5. Are you suffering from pre-existing (mental) health problems?

First of all - suffering from a mental health condition does NOT mean you're not lovable or not worth being loved! You are as individual, important and valuable as any star in the sky - whatever problems you might be dealing with.

But, if you're suffering from depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), or any other mental health challenge, your relationship can suffer too. Much of your attention will be focused on yourself, your daily

survival and your recovery, with possibly very little left to share. And that's assuming that you truly love your partner and are desperate for the relationship to survive.

With regards to your partner - there are 3 possible scenarios (I'll expand on these further down)...

1. Your partner realised soon enough after you met that you had some problems - but they were fine with that. They were happy to be your rock, and to reassure and help you whenever you were in need.
2. Unbeknown to you and perhaps to them (at least not consciously), your partner 'needed' you to have a problem. I know that may sound really odd! But, hiding behind your problem meant they were able to avoid having to face their own insecurities. This is mostly an unconscious process. For example, if you suffer from low self-esteem, your partner may have set themselves up to be your knight in shining armour, thereby hiding their own lack of confidence... and feeling better about themselves in the process.
3. Your partner has only recently realised that you're facing some challenges, and has started to keep his or her distance.

Perhaps this is because they've found themselves in unknown territory, aren't sure how to handle the problems, or because they're concerned about the long-term consequences.

Scenario 1

For whatever reason, your partner may have thought that your problems weren't too serious. They may have expected - rightly or wrongly - that you'd overcome whatever was troubling you. They may have thought your troubles wouldn't have a significant impact on the relationship. Perhaps they accepted that it would take time, and your problems were simply part of loving you for better or worse. In any case, they're likely to have had little real understanding of what your particular mental health challenges entailed.

Of course (mental) health problems affect a relationship! And often in ways that can't be adequately anticipated, particularly when you haven't been together very long. And certainly not by two people whose brains are high on love hormones!

However, you're now worried that you're about to lose your partner. It's therefore time to act, if you haven't already done all you

can to deal with your particular problems. Not only to save your relationship, but most of all for your own well-being.

You'll find help for a whole host of problems on my website, so take some time to explore. Or, you can contact BetterHelp and talk to a qualified counsellor right away. Whatever you do, spending some time on working out how to heal and/or manage your own mental health problems will help to improve all of your current relationships, and those in the future too.

Scenario 2

The most important thing for this scenario is to talk to your partner. Create a safe space for an open and honest conversation. Ask them how they feel about your particular problems. Do they feel glad that they're able to help and support you? If so, why? How do they feel when they've saved the day and helped you overcome - or avoid - something that's difficult or upsetting for you? And what's the impact of their actions on you and the way you feel?

It may be that your emotional struggles have become tangled up with their own, in which case you'll both be swimming against the tide! Take the time to try and understand your partner's motivations, and encourage them to do the same. Some couples

counselling or individual therapy could be really helpful for this situation.

Scenario 3

This is your chance to shine. It's not so much about struggling with mental health problems, but more how you deal with them. It's your attitude towards the situation that's important. Are you being a victim, or a fighter determined to overcome any obstacles?

Of course you'd want someone to unconditionally accept you for who you are... but managing your own problems is something that only you can take full responsibility for. If you just sit back and lose yourself in a world of misery and unhappiness, it's can get harder and harder for your partner to find the person they loved.

Your personal action plan

1. **Ask yourself really honestly who you are right now.**

Are you the best that you can be? Have you let yourself go? Have you perhaps allowed yourself to become a victim? If so, write down what your values are and what you want to achieve. Dare to dream! Do you need some help to achieve your goals? If so, [here's where you can start finding it](#). Always remember, there's no shame in needing a helping hand every

now and then!

2. Invest time in your most important relationships.

Remember your role as aunt/uncle, child, friend, colleague, sister/brother - all of these relationship can benefit from quality time and attention - if at all possible. A sense of community is one of our most important essential needs and is vital to our mental stability.

3. Make a list of any chores you've been avoiding and commit to dealing with one every day.

Why now? Because it helps enormously to gain a sense of control, and satisfaction, again. You'll feel better about yourself, which can go a long way towards making happier relationships all round.

6. Are you in a relationship with someone who's simply unavailable?

There are people who have certain personality traits or who are in particular situations that may not be ready for a serious relationship. They won't make the most attentive partners, or they'll find it difficult to commit themselves.

I'm thinking of someone who...

- is already married or in a relationship
- has a fear of commitment
- has recently broken up with someone else
- is a serial cheater
- suffers from an addiction
- has severe and enduring mental health problems, etc.

That doesn't mean they couldn't make a good partner, but it does mean that if the relationship has any hope of surviving, they'll need to start addressing their own problems right away. Otherwise, you'll carry on feeling that you're not truly connected to them, and may become increasingly frustrated by the distance between you.

Your personal action plan

Step 1

Think hard about the following 3 questions, and challenge yourself to be totally honest:

1. What are you getting out of this relationship, and which of your needs is it meeting? (It's also worth thinking about which of your needs it *isn't* meeting too...)

2. Are you managing to avoid facing up to certain issues or difficulties by staying in this relationship?
3. What would happen if you left?

Step 2

Now it's time to confront your fears! What worries you when you think about your relationship ending? Write each fear down on a piece of paper. No need to use proper sentences or fancy language - simply write down whatever comes into your head.

To help you get started...

- Are you scared of being alone?
- Is being close to someone just too challenging for you? Have you loved before and been hurt, as an adult or a child?
- Are you trying to hide who you really are? Does the distance between you and your partner allow you to feel safe in the knowledge that they'll never be able to discover the 'truth' about you?

Step 3

Time to take action: devise a plan to tackle each one of your fears. I know, I know... easier said than done. But, while this can seem like a huge task, it really does need to be done.

You may well need a bit of professional help with this, and that's okay. However, I also know that you're much stronger and more resourceful than you may be giving yourself credit for. That means you do have the ability to start tackling the issues that are causing your relationship troubles at the moment.

Start with just one issue and plot a way of dealing with that head-on. Take it step by step, and day by day. It's okay if it's going to take you weeks or even months to overcome just one small problem - it's not a race. All that matters is that you keep moving forwards, no matter how slowly.

If you can't or don't want to access in-person therapy, you can find tonnes of help and advice for free on my website. Scroll through the [sitemap](#) and choose the articles that relate most to you.

7. Do you really understand what it takes to keep a relationship going?

You fell in love, and thought you knew what it would take to build a healthy relationship (we all do in the early days). Or maybe you just took the plunge without ever giving it some serious thought. Now, though, you may well be shocked, hurt and disappointed that it isn't working out. Your hopes and expectations are, perhaps to your surprise, not coming to fruition.

We learn about relationships via experience, starting right from birth during the relationships we form with our parents/caregivers. Different relationships develop throughout our childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. In every relationship, we can be anywhere on the scale from utterly spoilt and mollycoddled to neglected, abused and (frequently) abandoned.

Every relationship helps us to learn about:

- trust
- boundaries
- giving and receiving
- judgement
- reliability and accountability

- safety and security
- the value of our emotions
- how to communicate...
- ...and a whole lot more.

All of our knowledge of these concepts forms the foundations of our serious intimate relationships. Our experiences create an intricate, unconscious pattern which we only become aware of when we consciously reflect on them in the present. We learn how our emotions influence our boundaries, and what we value and nurture or reject.

The key questions now are:

- Have you been able to develop your relationship knowledge as you've matured?
- Have you taken the time to reflect on any of the concepts above?
- Have you taken conscious learning from your experiences - in a positive way?
- Have you read books and articles on how relationships work?
- Have you talked to a knowledgeable, wise and trustworthy person?
- Have you challenged yourself to do better?

- Have you had some counselling/therapy? (It's easy to get that sorted these days if you want to - see my page on online counselling)

It's normal to no longer feel completely head over heels in love after a couple of years. That doesn't mean that your relationship is doomed. It just means that your relationship has moved into a different phase. And this offers a great opportunity to deepen and solidify your partnership. It requires you to invest in learning all about this new phase. You can see it as a chance to get to know yourself and your partner even better, and to (re)discover and value what you both can bring to this new phase.

Your personal action plan

Step 1

Pop into your local (second hand) bookshop or go to your favourite online book retailer and order a book about relationships that appeals to you. Or riffle through your friends' bookshelves - they might have some gems! And, of course, keep reading the articles on my website and sign up for my free email courses. I make plenty of information freely available to help in your quest for knowledge and personal development.

Step 2

Reflect daily on your role in everything that happens between the two of you. Don't judge yourself or your partner. Just be curious and try to see what's really happening. Write it all down.

Step 3

For each thing that happens between you every day, imagine 3 alternative ways of reacting. Did you get cross when you could have taken the time to listen harder? Did your partner jump to conclusions without letting you fully explain? Or perhaps you let something slide even though it made you feel uncomfortable - should you have challenged your partner in a calm, constructive way?

8. Do you feel as though you're just surviving from day to day?

Around 50% of people who are having relationship problems are depressed. No wonder. However, if you're just surviving and not building meaning and purpose in your life, you've very little to share with your partner. In a state of depression, you're also

unlikely to have the spare capacity to be truly interested in your partner's life.

Just to be clear, I'm not talking about being depressed after life-changing events, circumstances or a great loss. Though these can be terribly sad times and may test you to the limit, they are part and parcel of life. It's normal and expected for these to throw a shadow on your life and blacken your moods for some time. That does not mean you suffer from depression and are in need of prescribed antidepressants. (They're never a solution anyway and are likely to make the outcome worse!) It's likely that your sadness and low mood will disappear with the passing of time.

Here, I'm talking about long-term low mood, little interest or enjoyment in anything, and minimal activity other than robotically going through the motions of everyday life.

Of course you'd want your partner to take care of and support you if you're depressed - that's a reasonable expectation.

However, he or she would no doubt want to know that, after a period of time at least, you're actively working on your recovery. I know that can be difficult when you're in the midst of depression. But, if you want your relationship to survive this difficult time, you can't just rely on antidepressants (I wouldn't ever suggest you do

anyway) - or on your partner to fix everything. Hoping and wishing for better times isn't going to do it either, I'm afraid! You and I know there's so much more in you! And you can find plenty of help for overcoming depression in the pages of my website.

Your personal action plan

You'll first have to fall in love with life and yourself again (or for the first time). Only then can you hope for your partner to fall in love with you again (if indeed they have stopped loving you).

Here are 3 steps you can take:

1. Choose an interest or hobby you can totally immerse yourself in - preferably something completely new (downloadable pdf). Note: it must not be something that keeps your fingertips permanently stuck to a keyboard! Go old school and try something that isn't digital!
2. Write out a careful plan with specific actions to look after and develop yourself that you're going to undertake for the next 30 days. Tiny steps are absolutely fine to start with; build in progress as you go along. Your plan really needs to include exercise and good nutrition too (see Dr Kelly Brogan's work).

3. Undertake some (additional) voluntary work. It doesn't have to involve an organisation - you can aim for at least one Random Act of Kindness every day. In addition, do at least one or two RAoKs every day for your partner. It's important to do that without any expectation of a return RAoK or thank you, though. Realise that you're benefiting from the act of giving, and your partner is benefitting by receiving!

9. Do you suffer from an addiction?

Perhaps you've counted on the love and support of your partner, despite your addiction. Perhaps he or she wasn't aware of the severity of your addiction. You may have been able to hide it to some extent, so they've never known the true scale of the problem. Perhaps they've found out, and now you're worried they might leave you. However desperate you're feeling, you know there's only one way you can remedy the situation. And, yes, it's going to take all your courage!

Addicted to alcohol (or any other substance), gaming, porn, gambling, hoarding, spending money or anything else? The only way you may be able to get your partner or spouse to stay with you

is to become and remain actively engaged in overcoming your addiction:

- Be open about it
- Ask your partner for understanding and support
- Seek professional help
- Notice how your partner is supporting you. Could he or she by any chance be consciously or unconsciously supporting the maintenance of your addiction?

If you're not willing to work on overcoming your addiction, the only way you and your partner will be able to move forward is separately. I know that sounds harsh! But I'm afraid out of control addictions only serve to erode relationships over time.

Your personal action plan

Here are 3 steps you can take today:

1. Seek help - do a Google search for organisations in your area that offer help with your particular addiction. Contact one right away and immediately follow up on the first email or call received. You could also contact Better Help for online counselling with a professional, licensed therapist. For further

information, see my page: Online Mental Health Counselling.

2. Write down the stories you've already told yourself about why you can't or won't go through with that (if indeed you've decided not to go ahead and get help). Challenge them. Ask yourself which you want most: to hide your head in the sand, or to try to rebuild your relationship with the person you love?
3. Be sure to absorb everything I've written in the relationship-saving communication eguide to learn how best to talk to your partner about the challenges you're facing. Talk to them today or tomorrow, or as soon as possible.

10. Have you closed yourself off and built a wall around you?

The only reason you'd have done this is because you've been terribly hurt - either recently, or in the past. You've got scared, felt vulnerable and understandably have built a wall around you, anxiously hoping it will protect you from further injury. That wall perhaps needed to be there whilst you slowly recovered from an insult to your body/mind. It provided a safe space to rebuild yourself and learn to trust yourself and others again.

However, if you've cut yourself off in an attempt to avoid experiencing pain and sadness, you've also cut yourself off from experiencing happiness. But you do deserve to feel happy again.

So, be sure your wall has doors and windows, through which you can reach out to others and ask for help. Others, including your partner, will then have an opportunity to connect with you, and to hold, support and guide you.

It's now time to reassess the structure of your wall in the light of the reason you've found this article. This is all about building trust - if indeed you are still in the right relationship.

Your personal plan of action

1. [Watch this video](#) several times and learn from Brene Brown what trust really means. Discover what you ideally should be able to expect from a trusting relationship. You'll have the right information to open up a new kind of conversation with your partner with regards to your compatibility.
2. Assess whether indeed your partner is deserving of your trust. To help with this, I recommend you take a look at my article [Signs of an Abusive Relationship](#)

3. Reassess your wall and your relationship. Is the wall serving a necessary purpose? Could you perhaps be better off ending this relationship or marriage?

11. Have you lost yourself in the process of trying to please your partner?

I suspect the moment you read this, you knew it was you. You've given your all in the belief that this is what you do in a relationship. Of course, there's nothing wrong with the intent. However, if that has meant you've been working hard to change yourself into the person you thought your partner would want, you're no longer the person he or she fell in love with!

Your personal plan of action

Here are some questions for you to reflect on:

- Did you give with an expectation of immediate reciprocation? In school, this would look like: I'm giving you my lollipop, but I expect you to let me sit next to you and be kind to me. This is disingenuous - normally your partner can feel this and will probably reject it.

- Did you give your all at the expense of your own values and beliefs? That definitely means you're no longer the person you used to be.
- Did you give up on things and people that were important to you for the sake of pleasing your partner?
- Do you feel your sense of self-worth is now completely tied up with what your partner thinks of you? If so, chances are you're both stuck in an unhealthy pattern of relating.

Based on your answers, decide that it's time to reclaim some of yourself! You'll know in which ways you've compromised who you really are - so you can devise some really specific steps to get back to being the person you want to be.

Use this worksheet to help you get started....

Free printable worksheet

Specially for you - to help you move forward. Click the link to download the Reclaim Yourself worksheet.

12. Do you suffer from (unexplained) mood swings?

There's nothing quite as trying and tiring as being with someone who, at the drop of a hat, or from one day to the next, changes their mood. It's soul-destroying for the person on the receiving end as well as for yourself.

Your partner always has to wonder what mood you're going to be in - at that event, when asked this or that, when you're out together or in a group, when you're waking up in the morning or going to bed at night. Often, they'll be walking on eggshells for fear of sparking a sudden change of mood.

Your personal action plan

Step 1

Research if you could be suffering from any of the following:

- Blood sugar imbalances
- Food intolerances or sensitivity (certain grains or dairy for example)

- Vitamin deficiencies (almost certainly if you're eating fast-foods and drinking soda)
- Thyroid problems
- Side effects of any medication (check the label and research online)
- Post-traumatic stress
- Build up of stress

Step 2

Read Dr Kelly Brogan's book: A Mind of Your Own (or her online blog), to learn how you can adapt your diet and daily habits to balance and improve your mood. Dr Brogan is a psychiatrist who treats people suffering from mood swings, depression, anxiety and other mental health problems, entirely without medication.

Step 3

Own the problem, explain it to your partner, apologise and let him or her see that you're making some positive changes

Your mood swings can also be caused by:

- the contraceptive pill (women)
- premenstrual symptoms (women)

- inflammation
- a leaky gut (yes, really! All kinds of stuff gets in your bloodstream which can cause havoc in your body)

To learn more about all this and how to balance your mood within a month, visit Dr Kelly Brogan's website. Just type mood swings in the search box.

Finally

We've now looked at 12 common relationship problems that you have a great measure of control over. If you've identified something that fits with you and you want to change it, you can! Perhaps your partner will fall in love with you again - but there are no guarantees. Remember: we can never *make* someone do anything.

And if it does become clear that it's time for your relationship to end, at least you'll have had an opportunity to learn and grow for the experiences you've shared together - including the breakup, if it comes to that.

Personal counselling or therapy can really help you on the journey, as can couple therapy or counselling. And above all else, I hope you can trust that you have the strength and the ability to make

positive changes that will lead to a happier, more fulfilling life for you. I have faith in you!