



Why Wait Until It's Too Late

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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It seems that almost every week I have an individual on my therapy couch who is upset over a lost relationship. There are usually tears and statements such as "I know that I wasn't a good partner but I never knew that s/he would leave!" Often this statement ends with the word "again".

Then the person who was left talks about all the things that s/he has done to try to win the other person back - things that they should have done in the past that would likely have kept the relationship alive. They purchase trips to the Caribbean and arrange to have vows renewed, send flowers, obsessively write text messages pledging undying love and offering promises. (These usually fall on deaf ears). They talk about how much they miss the other person and how they have sworn off drinking, affairs, pornography or other vices that led to the destruction of the partnership.

They blame the other person who they accuse of being unreasonable because forgiveness is not immediate and the void that they feel is not filled in the way they think it should be filled.

Well, life doesn't work that way!

A person doesn't usually leave a relationship impulsively or after the first little problem. In fact, most people put up with neglect and/or abuse for a very long time before deciding that they need to make changes in lifestyle that they hope will result in better health and happiness. In fact, they usually try repeatedly to communicate verbally or in writing about their needs and may even suggest counselling as a way of resolving issues before they even think about leaving the relationship.

It takes a fairly long time for a couple to get into trouble so why would one expect that they could get out of trouble quickly?

Just because you are hearing words that you longed for over time doesn't mean that the other person will follow through with appropriate behaviours.

Most people will work very hard from point "A" to point "B" in order to get what they want but not many actually care about what happens after point "B". If your partner wants you to move home again, forgive them for a past sin, or meet a need that they have, they will likely say or do whatever they can to reach their goal but, once they have it, there is no guarantee that they will continue to be motivated to build the relationship.

I have had several people look shocked when I have suggested that they watch the other person for eighteen months to determine if the positive and healthy behaviours will continue. You see, words are just words. The only way that you will actually know if someone has truly changed is to watch them over time. If they can maintain the changes for eighteen months than you know that they have changed for life. If they can't, then you have to decide if you can live alone or with the inappropriate patterns.

Oh, and if you are in a relationship right now that is struggling, you have a choice about what to do about that. First of all, begin listening to the other person. Really listening. That way you will begin to know what the needs are and then you will be able to work towards

seeing that they are met. If you are having problems understanding or implementing them, seek professional help.

An even simpler method would be to think about the positive things that happened at the beginning of the relationship and what brought the two of you together in the first place. See if you can re-ignite the spark by re-creating them.

If you truly want the relationship to last into the future, the most important thing is that you do something positive right now. Why wait until it's too late?