

## Are You In Love with a Broken Person?

It happens to everyone at some point: You are in a relationship, things are going well, the two of you are existing inside of a beautiful love cloud. Then, all of a sudden, something happens. The cloud lifts. And you start seeing things you question.

It's so tempting to quickly dismiss any notion that your one true love could be broken or faulty. The love cloud was so good! *That's* what's real, isn't it—the first rush of bliss? Not these small things that are appearing now—the defensiveness that arises when you ask a seemingly harmless question, or the caring attitude that you appreciated so much in the beginning that is starting to seem more like neediness.

Perhaps your partner is making you feel like a nuisance, or isn't living up to the values he claimed to live by at the beginning of your relationship. Or maybe you're starting to see that she can never admit a weakness or a mistake—and instead will blame you for anything that goes wrong. Or perhaps your love is becoming increasingly controlling or critical.

Whatever it is you're noticing, I can tell you this: It's crucial that you don't try to talk yourself out of those unsure feelings.

You wouldn't see yellow cautionary signs that warn of a steep, winding hill and continue barreling along without slowing down, would you? Relationships are no different. There are warning signs: Some are yellow, while others are big, red and flashing! Ignore either kind at your own peril.

You may think you can change the person you're in relationship with, or that by loving them you'll help them get healthy. Please hear me: This never works! Yes, it is your sacred duty to love others as you would yourself, but some people need to be loved from a distance. Who are these people? Broken people who are not getting help.

Notice I didn't just say broken people. We are all broken in some way. This doesn't mean that it's OK to just go about living life without getting healing. In fact it is your responsibility to get healing before you infect others.

How angry do you get when you are sitting next to a guy on a bus and he starts sneezing and coughing? And as soon as he's finished with his germ fit, he tells you just how sick he feels and he can't believe he's even heading to work. Are you supposed to feel sorry for this guy who has now just infected the air you breathe because he chose not to stay home? You may empathize with him, but I'm guessing you would not be thrilled that his choice has now threatened your wellbeing.

The same goes for unhealed emotional wounds. The tricky part is that these hurts are harder to detect than the flu. It can take weeks, months or even years before you detect them.

Even trickier, many people have found clever ways to disguise their brokenness—even to the point that they have fooled themselves into thinking "all is well."

Some people intentionally hide their brokenness from others because they fear no one will want to be with them if they are seen for who they really are. While this is sad, it is also deceptive. It requires a false front and since it is impossible—yes, impossible—to maintain a facade, the brokenness always comes to light, and the damage to the relationship sometimes is irreparable. Why? Because everything was built on a lie. Deceiving someone into thinking one thing about you when something else is true is a lie.

Some people have lied to others and to themselves about their brokenness for so long, they actually believe themselves to be healthy and whole. The result is still deception, and if you are in a relationship with such a person, odds are overwhelming that you will suffer greatly.

Unless you are codependent and you need to be needed by broken people, you probably want to be in a relationship with a healthy person.

The question to ask your significant other, then, is, “What have you done to heal?”

You don’t need a “perfect” person, but you do want to be with someone who has taken the time to rebuild from his or her brokenness.

Brokenness comes from many different sources—such as abuse, divorce, neglect, bullying or alienation—some severe, others seemingly more subtle. But the effects are always the same--a dysfunctional way of relating to others.

Being in a relationship with someone who’s never been broken is slim. But much like homes, a beautiful brand new one is nice, but a rebuilt, restored one can be equally as beautiful, with the added benefit of having had a chance to settle into its foundation and develop greater charm.

You can sometimes tell when an old home has been restored and renovated but how do you tell if a person has rebuilt from brokenness? How do you know if they are one storm away from crumbling?

These are signs of incomplete or false healing:

- Has difficulty admitting weaknesses, faults and mistakes
- Demands love, trust and reliability from others before proving himself
- Uses false ways of “connecting” --such as flattery and sex
- Has an addiction--to food, alcohol, drugs, sex, shopping, cutting, etc.
- Constantly puts herself down
- Needs reassurance from outsiders, such as seeking attention from the opposite sex
- Uses people for his advantage
- Is resistant to changing bad habits
- Is negative and hopeless
- Lies frequently (for any reason)
- Blames herself
- Justifies others’ bad behaviors

- Exhibits angry outbursts
- Keeps emotions to himself
- Is religious but doesn't know God
- Stays stuck

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it gives you a general overview of some of the warning signs of brokenness. Some of them are red flags while others are yellow, but none should ever be ignored, justified or swept under the rug. They will come back to bite you, hard, later.

If you discover that someone you love is suffering from brokenness, lovingly point it out to him or her. Explain how it is impacting your relationship. He or she should want to get help. If he doesn't, you are possibly dealing with a foolish person with little regard for how he is infecting others. If he won't remove himself from the situation, it may be time to get off the bus.