

# When breaking up is hard to do

*Stay me with flagons,  
Comfort me with apples:  
For I am sick of love.*

- The Song of Solomon (The Bible)

Though this was written ages ago, it is as relevant today as it ever was. There are many times in an on-going relationship when we might identify with those words.

It is normal for human beings to drive each other crazy at times, because we all have our idiosyncracies. Differences are what make for exciting and fulfilling human relationships.

However, action may be needed when the differences we once tolerated and celebrated begin driving us apart.

More than half the respondents to a Relationships Australia study said they would be prepared to seek counselling if faced with real difficulties in their relationship. When asked what factors had the most negative impact on their relationship, 41 percent cited lack of time to spend together, while 29 percent felt lack of communication was the most harmful element.

So given that all relationships go through ups and downs, how can you tell if your relationship is really in trouble?

Alarm bells should ring if partners start to distance themselves from one another and spend much more time with other people or at work than with their partner. While we all might have the odd occasion when this happens, the danger comes when it starts to happen regularly and is neither acknowledged nor talked about.

You might hear warning bells if you know there are problems in the relationship, but you ignore them because the last time they were raised you couldn't seem to solve them.

Feeling flat, depressed and alone can also mean something is going wrong in your relationship.

Losing interest in common goals or projects for both of you, such as a home renovation, may be another sign: what was once exciting seems to have permanently stalled and neither party can discuss why this has happened.

The bottom line? A relationship is in trouble when you are either not talking to one another or are arguing but never resolving anything. Basically, whenever there appears to be an emotional standstill in the relationship, there is a problem.

Some couples end up growing apart simply by accident. If the "couple" aspect of your relationship is not continually nurtured, the special connection you enjoy can wither and die.

If this resonates with you, ask yourself when you and your partner last went out or put aside time to do something together. If you can't remember that's a sign you need to start building time to do things together as a couple before it's too late.

The good news is that if you have struck problems, all is not lost. The negative trend can be reversed. If you're both prepared to acknowledge your relationship is in trouble, it can be retrieved.

Sometimes this is difficult because one person may be more distressed than the other. But if both partners say it feels awful for them and they need to do something about it, they are on the road to fixing the relationship.

Sometimes you can do this on your own, but if you feel the problems are just too big for you to resolve, it's important to get some outside help from an experienced couples counsellor.

There's always hope if you can acknowledge that there is a problem you want to solve. It's up to you.

## Survival tips

- **If you are always arguing without resolving anything, there is a problem you need to act on**
- **If you can't resolve it yourselves, get some help from a counsellor before it's too late**
- **If you nurture your relationship properly, you are more likely to be able to survive problems.**