

# The 6 Most Common Enemies of Intimacy



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In the beginning of an intimate relationship, new partners strive to give it all they can. They want to love deeply, give from their hearts, and to be treasured similarly in return. They are very careful to practice those behaviors that keep their lovers close and wanting more. Sadly, as their relationship matures, emerging ways of behaving can too often erode the love they've created. As more time goes by, two people who once felt loved and treasured have become unsafe to each other. And very often, they have not realized how they've gotten that way.

There are six common behaviors that can damage any loving relationship if they are allowed to continue. The struggling partners I work with have often slipped into these destructive patterns without even realizing it. Had they been able to see them earlier, they could have stopped the damage they had wreaked.

Identifying and recognizing their presence is the first step to healing, but it is only the beginning. It takes commitment and hard work on the part of both partners to stop these enemies of intimacy from undermining their positive feelings towards each other along with a mutually sacred promise to keep them from happening again in the future.

The following examples illustrate what a partner senses when each of these behaviors happen. Either partner may be the first to notice them, so I've alternated between male and female genders.

### **Enemy Number One: Disconnection**

Remember that man who couldn't get enough of you? He dropped everything when you needed him and turned his attention to you immediately. There was never anything he needed to do that took precedence over your desires, no matter how small. He kept a list in his mind of anything that was important to you and made sure it was available even before you remembered yourself.

But, over time, things have changed. Now he's often preoccupied with matters that clearly come before the relationship. Yes, you can still get his attention, but it takes work, justification, and presenting your needs at just the right time. He tells you that he feels terrible when he forgets an important date, and you want to be supportive. Yet, those times you don't feel central to his life anymore seem to be increasing. You don't want to seem needy, but you're feeling more and more neglected and sometimes ignored completely.

Where is that guy who put you first no matter what? He tells you that he still loves you, but he's just not at all available the way he used to be. You can't pretend anymore. He is definitely more disconnected.

### **Enemy Number Two: Dissing**

There was this amazing, compassionate woman you fell in love with that seems to be inhabited by someone you can't please anymore. You try to talk to her about things that you're upset about, and she responds with telling you that you're being too reactive or preaches about what you could have done differently. When you try to get her to be present, to care, and to listen, she flips it and tells you that you're in the wrong by wanting what you want.

It seems that you can't do anything right anymore. She finds fault where she used to give support and challenges your responses by telling you that you're being oversensitive. When you ask for something you need, she tells you that you're in arrears because you're not giving her what she needs.

When you ask her what's wrong, she says it's nothing and you're being overly concerned. When she wants you, she can be very seductive and engaging, but it's less and less often and you definitely do not like the direction this is taking.

### **Enemy Number Three: Domination**

He was so exciting when you first connected -- a really take-charge guy who could handle anything that came his way. He was protective of you and so confident. The best of testosterone in abundance, he swept you off your feet.

You, of course, completely adored and supported the way he felt and acted. Yes, he probably didn't take any prisoners when he was challenged, but you saw that as a plus. No one could defeat him or get in his way, and he did it all with a charming edge. If ever a woman wanted a knight in shining armor, it was him.

Until he made you his opponent.

After the honeymoon waned a bit, you realized that you didn't always agree with him and sometimes wanted or thought something that he didn't like. If anything didn't work the way it was supposed to, there was only one good guy, and it wasn't likely to be you. It was great when you were on the same team, but as an enemy, he's merciless. On top of everything else, he sees nothing wrong with his behavior and fully expects that you'll still love him the same way when it's time for sex.

#### **Enemy Number Four: Mistrust**

She had a lot of relationships before she decided you were the one, and she was very convincing when she agreed to be yours forever. Lately, though, she's telling you some half-truths that don't always add up. Where she was so transparent and offering of herself before, now she seems to be avoiding some of your questions and giving you answers that leave you wondering.

She's still very warm and sexually available so you don't want to be unnecessarily concerned, but there's this nagging voice in you that wonders if you're missing something. You keep trying to put the pieces together in a way that feels more secure and put your doubts out of your mind, but you also don't want to be a fool. She adamantly denies any wrong doing, but you're wary. Maybe people can change.

When you gently ask her if she's bored with you or is disappointed in the relationship, she adamantly swears that nothing has changed. It's the intensity of her voice that seems a little defensive.

#### **Enemy Number Five: Same old, same old**

At the beginning of your relationship, you couldn't say anything that he didn't find fascinating. You were pretty hyped at his great sense of humor, his innovative ways of looking at things, and his amazing intuition. You stayed up all night, talking endlessly when you weren't making love. There was never a moment in which you weren't transfixed by his way of looking at the world and it seemed as if it would last forever. You lived in a mutual world of constant discovery.

You remember the first night he told you the same joke. It seemed a little odd that he didn't notice that your laugh was a little strained. As time went by, he did and said so much you'd heard before. As the repeated stories became increasingly stale, you tried hard to find reasons to excuse them. Maybe it was just career battle fatigue or the seduction of secure familiarity that made him stop trying to keep you interested and challenged. You even playfully tried to help him see that he was getting a little too predictable. It didn't seem to help.

Then you find yourself more interested in what other people are saying, particularly when they are in the process of challenge and new experiences. Armed with new motivation, you start bringing in your own excitement about transformation and attempt to get him to join you in looking differently at the world. He acknowledges that you are happier exploring new options, but says he's really fine the way he is.

### **Enemy Number Six: Diminishing Nostalgia**

When times were a little hard in your past, she would always remind you how important it was to hold on to the things you loved about each other and the great memories from the past. She would make you focus on the delicious moment when you first chose each other, and share those feelings as if they were happening in the moment. Once, when there wasn't enough money in your mutual bank account, she found that special book you loved as a child. You'll never forget her funny, squeaky laugh when she found the puppy in the middle of the bed that you'd seen at the pound.

She knew that you didn't have a mom to nurse you when you were sick as a kid. At the slightest mention that something was not quite right, she'd immediately take care of you no matter what she had to let go of to do so. She just always made you feel that everything would be okay, even when the situation seemed irresolvable.

Now she doesn't seem to want to go there anymore. She's only focused on what's missing and why the future isn't brighter. No matter what you do to lighten the moment, or to bring back nostalgia, she is all about practical and how to just fix what's wrong and get on with it. You often find yourself alone in your sweet memories and unable to get her to experience them with you anymore. You still love each other enough, but wonder how you'll keep regenerating when things don't go as planned if you can't hold on to what was once sacred.

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Even one of these warning signs can signal a relationship that is in trouble. Intensity, frequency, and duration are further dimensions. You can be experiencing several of these behaviors simultaneously, but they happen rarely, last a short time, and are far apart. In between, your relationship is filled with commitment, love, and regeneration. If that is so, you have no reason to be concerned. If, however, even one of them is happening over and over and increasing in intensity and duration, it can be a stronger indication of an underlying problem.

The earlier you are able to identify a partner who is disconnecting more often, finding fault with many of your behaviors, increasing his or her need to control, acting in suspicious ways, living in old rituals and patterns, or forgetting what is sacred, you owe it to each other to bring those behaviors to light, and ask your partner for help.

When you can be courageous enough to face these warning signs of diminishing intimacy before they get out of hand, it will be easier for you and your partner to turn things around. Intimacy is the act of living in the heart of your beloved. When relationships move from intertwined to parallel, that bond is weakened. But it doesn't have to break. If you and your partner become

aware that you are losing the intimacy that once fed that bond, you can change your behavior and [bring back the closeness you once treasured](#).

*Dr. Randi's free advice e-newsletter, Heroic Love, shows you how to avoid the common pitfalls that keep people from finding and keeping romantic love. Based on over 100,000 face-to-face hours counseling singles and couples over her 40-year career, you'll learn how to zero in on the right partner, avoid the dreaded "honeymoon is over" phenomenon, and make sure your relationship never gets boring. [www.heroiclove.com](http://www.heroiclove.com)*