

## Relationship Deal-breakers

Contributed by Margaret Paul, Ph.D.  
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In the 37 years that I have been counseling couples, I have discovered that there are only a few issues that are true relationship deal-breakers. Many of the issues that tear relationships apart are not actual deal-breakers. Rather, most divorces and breakups are the result of one or both partner's unwillingness to learn from the conflicts that exist in all primary relationships. But some conflicts and differences are actual deal-breakers.

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### HAVING CHILDREN

Early in my career as a psychotherapist, I worked with Mary and Cal. Mary and Cal met when Mary was 38 and Cal was 47. Cal had been married before and had two adult children, while Mary had never been married. Cal made it very clear to Mary that he did not, under any circumstances, want more children. Mary seemed to accept this, but secretly hoped to change Cal's mind once they were married.

A year after they were married, Mary brought up the issue of having children. Cal was appalled. He felt angry, trapped and betrayed by Mary's secret hope, as well as by her dishonesty. Mary begged and pleaded, hoping Cal's love for her would soften his position. But he stayed committed to his decision not to have any more children.

This situation has a very sad ending. Mary was devastated. She loved Cal, but having children was actually extremely important to her. She didn't want to leave him and she couldn't let go of wanting a child. The stress of the situation eventually eroded her immune system and she died of ovarian cancer of few years after bringing up the baby issue.

I learned a lot from Mary and Cal's experience. I learned that the baby issue is a deal-breaker. It is not healthy for someone who really wants a baby to give that up, and it is not healthy for someone who does not want a baby to go along with having one. This deep and basic issue needs to be dealt with head-on, early in a relationship, before people move ahead with commitment and marriage.

## WORK

Rhonda and Fred fell in love in their late 30's. Each had jobs that they loved and that were very important to them. Fred was the vice-president of a large company, while Rhonda had a flourishing practice as a pediatrician. They both lived in Los Angeles. All seemed fine until an incredible opportunity opened up for Fred – one that he had always dreamed of. The problem was that it meant moving to New York. Fred's work became a deal-breaker.

Some people can commute and maintain a relationship, but this was not realistic for Rhonda and Fred, since they both wanted to have children. They realized that if either of them gave up the work they loved, they would feel very resentful. They had no choice but to end the relationship. Even though they loved each other, they recognized that their relationship would soon erode if one of them gave themselves up.

## BETRAYAL

Dishonesty and infidelity can often be deal-breakers, depending upon the situation. Some people can learn from and grow through these difficult situations, while for others the wound is too deep to repair.

Mandy and Hal were in their 50's when they met and fell in love. Both were in unhappy long-term marriages, which they decided to leave to be with each other.

However, Hal had married when he was very young. He had spent his life working hard to support his wife and children. He had never had an opportunity to do some of the things he really wanted to do – like travel on his own or explore relationships with other women. He loved Mandy but he felt trapped. He wanted his freedom.

As a result he started to pull away from Mandy, which was very painful for her. They received counseling to try to reconcile the situation. Mandy was

willing for Hal to leave and travel for six months, but Hal was reluctant to leave Mandy. Mandy had not expected a man in his 50's to need to sow wild oats.

Then Mandy found out that Hal had slept with another woman. His pulling away was bad enough, but his infidelity was a deal-breaker. Mandy ended their relationship the day she discovered the affair. She told Hal that she still loved him but could not continue this way. She left the door open by telling him that if he ever got his wanderlust out of his system, she would consider trying again.

Dishonesty about money can also be a deal-breaker, such as finding out that your mate is earning money by selling drugs or through some other illegal operation.

Most conflicts – conflicts that are really about communication and control issues – can be resolved when both people are willing to learn. But some conflicts are true deal-breakers.

#### About The Author

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is the best-selling author and co-author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?" and "Healing Your Aloneness." She is the co-creator of the powerful Inner Bonding healing process. Learn Inner Bonding now! Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course: <http://www.innerbonding.com> or email her at <mailto:margaret@innerbonding.com> . Phone Sessions Available.