

7 Most Desirable Traits in a Partner

Run your partner (quietly) through this test.

[Karen Nimmo](#)



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"If the person you are talking to doesn't appear to be listening, be patient. It may simply be that he has a small piece of fluff in his ear." — AA Milne, Winnie the Pooh

I was working with a man who was beating up on himself because he couldn't make a relationship work.

He'd been married twice and a third serious relationship had just fallen over. He'd taken all the responsibility for these breakups and believed he was just "no good" at building lasting relationships.

It's common for people who've been hurt to have this belief system — but it's not helpful. It's more useful to work out why a relationship broke up, your role in it and how you might do things better or differently next time.

That's not always easy. When you've had a difficult relationship history or been traumatised, rejected or hurt, it can shape your beliefs on what you expect, need or want from a relationship.

It can skew your thoughts on what's acceptable in a partner, what you could (and should) work on — and when you should pack up and run.

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Whenever I work with people who've been hurt we spend time figuring out what a healthy relationship looks like so they'll go into the next one stronger and clearer about their needs.

We're all different but, interestingly, the same requirements keep rising to the top. Here they are, with a fresh spin:

1. Kindness: Your partner peels your orange (but only if you like oranges).

"But love can only truly be measured by actions. It can be a small thing, such as peeling an orange for a person you love because you know they don't like doing it."

— Marian Keyes

In other words, your partner is kind to you, they pay attention to the little things. Lots of them. Your partner knows what you like — and what you don't — and delivers on it. He or she will go out of their way to do something small to improve your day. And you'll do it for them — not because you need to pay back but because you're a good partner too. Kindness is paramount for a reason. We all have our moments but a mean and critical person will eventually bring it home — and you don't want to be on the end of it.

2. Trust: You don't feel tempted to break into their phone.

You and your partner have worked out your own set of rules and boundaries for your relationship. You trust them: where they are (and with whom) and to stick to what you've agreed on, especially around sex, alcohol, drugs, porn, gambling and money.

3. Emotions: You know what you're getting when you walk in the door.

That means your partner can regulate their emotions (within reason). Supporting your partner is admirable but you shouldn't have to do all the heavy lifting in an emotional sense. It gets tiring. So be the support act when necessary but make sure you are getting what you need too. And if you're not feeling supported — speak up; give your partner a chance to step up. Don't make them guess what's going on for you.

4. Load-sharing: Your partner doesn't set up camp on the couch.

Laziness can be a deal breaker. The unfair division of chores within households is one of the biggest sources of misery in relationships. Stressful work and financial demands puts a lot of pressure on relationships and families. Work out what you can and can't do; work out what can, and

needs to, be shared. Make sure your expectations are reasonable and you've talked things through with your partner until you've reached common ground. Then book in regular catch-ups to see that you're both managing, and are happy with, your load. Or at least happy enough to hang in there.

5. Fun: Your partner gets a joke — hopefully one of yours.

They don't have to have a burgeoning stand-up comedy career but a sense of humour matters. Laughter lightens the mood; it lifts us up — even in the face of suffering. A relentlessly grim approach to life will create a relentlessly grim domestic life. So make sure you can see the light side too.

6. Future: Your partner wants (roughly) what you want from life.

You don't have to want exactly the same things in every sphere of life — that would be weird and possibly unhealthy. But it's helpful to share values and be heading down the same track (or an agreed one) on the big things, like money, sex, parenting, culture, religion, where to live (rural, urban and/or country) and what you want from life. It's okay to disagree but talk about it: taking wildly diverse roads can lead you down a rocky path.

7. Support: Your partner has your back. Always.

You know they're there for you. More than they're there for anyone else. That's gold.

Thanks for reading! Join [my email list here](#) for and receive a free gift: [Seeing Someone: a brief guide to psychology, therapy and coaching](#).

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