

Relationship Situations

Instructions.

In this section you will find a number of questions about various situations that sometimes arise in romantic relationships. We want to know how you would react to them if you encountered them in your own experience. We will use the term “your partner” to refer to your relationship partner in these hypothetical situations. We don’t necessarily mean your actual partner at the moment, in your real life, although it’s fine for you to think about that person if you like. Even if you don’t have a partner at the moment, please imagine how you would probably respond if you did have a partner and found yourself in one of the situations described below.

Under each scenario, you will find multiple possible ways you might respond to it. For each one, please indicate how likely you would be to respond in this way; use a scale that runs from **1** (not at all likely) to **5** (very likely), with the intermediate numbers (**2**, **3**, and **4**) indicating intermediate degrees of likelihood. Put your answer (**1**, **2**, **3**, **4**, or **5**) on the short line in front of each option (___).

Scenarios

1. You’re at a party and your partner just revealed, to a group of people, an intimate fact or story about you that you had hoped would remain private. What would you do?

- ___ Try to minimize the damage and talk to him/her later about it, asking him/her not to do this kind of thing again.
- ___ Get really upset, possibly expressing your anger and hurt feelings right there on the spot.
- ___ Contain your reaction at the time but refuse to speak to your partner for days afterward.
- ___ Do nothing much at that moment, remain cool, and then seriously consider ending the relationship, because your partner can’t be trusted.

2. You’ve had a really hard day, things have not gone well, your self-esteem is damaged, and your partner notices. What would you do?

- ___ Explain what happened, say how you feel, and rely on the partner to provide care and support.
- ___ Try to handle it on your own and not expect your partner to be particularly sympathetic.
- ___ Mope around a little, say you have a headache, and watch to see whether your partner cares enough to offer sympathy and support.
- ___ Complain openly and let it all out, leaving your partner to take it however he or she wishes.

3. You are involved in a car accident, are taken to a hospital to have your neck pain evaluated, and then are discharged to go home. Your partner is sympathetic, but not as sympathetic as you think is warranted. What would you do?

- ___ Just accept it; it’s really my problem and I shouldn’t expect him/her to get involved in it.
- ___ Feel really hurt and angry; complain to my partner for being so cold and unsympathetic.
- ___ Gently talk to him/her to help him/her understand why I am worried about my neck, the continuing pain, the damage to the car, etc.
- ___ Think about breaking up; this is no way for a boyfriend/girlfriend to behave.

4. Your partner is going away on vacation for a few days. Before leaving, he/she tells you to expect a call from him/her shortly. A of couple days later, you still haven't received a call. What would you do?

Think the vacation was just a ploy; your partner has probably been planning to leave you, and the vacation is just an excuse to be on his/her own for a while.

Realize you're better off without him/her anyway, and plan to break up.

Think there must be a reasonable explanation, and just wait, worried but patiently.

Try, by calling friends and family members or the place where he/she is supposed to be staying, to track your partner down and talk with him/her.

5. You notice that your partner has been spending a lot of time working late at the office with someone you consider to be a possible romantic rival of yours. What would you do?

Feel insecure and jealous and maybe withdraw a little, but not say anything directly about it.

Mention it gently, indicating that it makes you nervous and you could use reassurance.

Begin to swing by the office or the restaurant where they work, just to make sure nothing is going on.

Not react at all; you know that you and everyone else lust after other people all the time, and if the two of them sleep together it's no big deal.

6. Your partner asks you to hang out with his/her friends, but when you do, your partner ignores you and pays attention only to the friends. What would you do?

Behave normally but later explain to your partner how you felt.

Don't say anything about it; you don't want to create an argument.

Think it's a sign that the person doesn't want you there.

Take your partner aside and explain that this is not an acceptable way to behave.

7. You're convinced you saw a ghost and are considering telling your partner about it. What would you do?

Tell him/her about it, admitting you know it's pretty strange, and trust him/her to be sympathetic and helpful.

Don't tell him/her, because he/she is likely to think it's crazy.

Go ahead and tell him/her, even though you're pretty worried that he/she will think you're crazy.

Tell him/her you are really frightened and need him/her to stay by your side for a few days.

8. Your partner hangs up on you during an argument. What would you do?

Refuse to talk to him/her even if he/she calls to apologize.

Call repeatedly until your partner picks up.

Give him/her some time to cool off, and then talk later.

Think about breaking up; there is no reason to accept this much hassle.

9. You notice that your partner's eyes are straying to someone at another restaurant table who is very attractive. What would you do?

Feel insecure and jealous and maybe withdraw a little bit, but not say anything directly about it.

Mention it jokingly, indicating that you saw it and accept it and are not at upset about it.

Get really upset and admit that it offends you and hurts your feelings.

Do a little flirting of your own; there's always more than one fish in the sea.

10. You are steadily involved with someone, but while vacationing with your family in another part of the country, you meet someone who is very attractive and obviously interested in you. What would you do?

See if the person is interested in a vacation-long affair and if so, indulge.

Talk with the person in a friendly way, but if he/she comes on to you, let him/her know that

Get to know the person with the idea that if he/she seems better than your partner, get involved and tell your partner that your relationship with him/her is over.

Try to ignore the person's interest and advances because the whole situation makes you uncomfortable.

11. Your partner is staying late after work to finish a project due the next day, and he/she is doing this with a co-worker who just happens to be extremely attractive. What would you do?

Worry all night about what your partner is doing with this person, wondering if they are doing something like kissing or having sex rather than simply working on the project.

Forbid him/her to go; you won't stand for it, even if your partner gets penalized a bit at work.

Wish your partner good luck on the project and tell him/her honestly that it makes you a little nervous, so you hope he/she doesn't come home too late.

Don't think twice about it; it's natural, and besides, you've been eyeing a co-worker at your office, too.

12. You have been dating your partner for four months and things are going well. Your partner has expressed a strong desire for an exclusive commitment. What would you do?

Decide to commit; you really enjoy his/her company and are interested in a long-term relationship.

Decide not to commit; even though you like him/her, you aren't ready for a long-term commitment.

Grab him/her while you can; this kind of offer doesn't come along very often.

Say no thanks; you're not interested in any kind of long-term commitment.

13. Suppose you have been becoming increasingly depressed, and you don't really understand why. You haven't talked very much with your partner about it. What would you do?

Talk to my partner about it, because he/she is thoughtful and sympathetic and may have good ideas about what I should do.

Go to a therapist on my own, without bothering my partner about it; it's not his/her problem.

Ask my partner to hold me, allow me to cry in his/her arms, and pay a little more attention to me for a while.

Try to ignore it, get more involved in work or other activities, and hope it goes away.

14. You ask your partner to have sex with you, but he/she says no. What would you do?

Accept his/her refusal; there are many good reasons why a person might not want to have sex at a particular time.

Become sad and wonder why your partner doesn't find you attractive, and think maybe he/she no longer loves you.

Quietly ignore it and think about having sex with someone else.

Try harder to convince your partner to have sex, showing that it upsets you to be turned down.

15. Your partner, an already busy person, has become interested in a new activity or challenge (e.g., parachute jumping, learning a new instrument, exploring a nearby mountain trail), and you realize that this may take time away from your relationship. What would you do?

Explain forcefully that the relationship is more important than spending time on something else.

Support and encourage the decision; it's natural for a person to want to explore new activities.

Let him/her go ahead and do this but think seriously about finding a better partner.

Suggest that you engage in this activity together, so that the activity and the relationship can be pursued at the same time.

16. Lately, you've been feeling that your partner doesn't understand you the way he or she used to, as if the two of you are no longer on the same page. What would you do?

Talk to my partner about it, because he/she is thoughtful and sympathetic and may have good ideas about what to do.

Not say anything and try to minimize my contacts with him/her.

Begin to monitor my partner more closely, just to make sure he/she is not fooling around with someone else.

Start paying attention to other possible partners; there's no reason to be stuck in a relationship that is no longer exciting.

17. Your partner's ex-partner's mother dies, and the mother was someone your partner knew very well. The ex is really sad and is relying on your partner to fly across the country and help arrange the funeral with him/her. What would you do?

Be really upset, because you know the ex has been scheming for a long time to get your partner back, and the funeral just provides an excuse.

Send the ex a sympathy card, let your partner know that the situation makes you a little nervous, but encourage him/her to go and do whatever he/she thinks is best.

Allow your partner to go, but decide that you are going to make sure you're not very dependent on him/her, because he/she may not be around forever.

Say it's okay, but only if you get to go along as well.

18. Your partner calls you several times a day to tell you he/she loves you while you are on a business trip to another city. What would you do?

Feel flattered and loved and happy that he/she is so open about expressing these feelings.

Feel smothered and begin pulling away because this is getting too intense.

Let him/her know that you love him/her too, but they shouldn't call quite so much because it makes you feel a little pressured, and you need to get your work done.

Wonder if the person is calling because he/she doesn't trust you and it worried that you'll get interested in someone else.

19. You are thinking of competing in a national writing competition, but you aren't sure whether it's worth the time and effort, and you aren't sure whether you have any chance of winning. How would you interact with your partner in relation to this situation?

- I would think about the options mainly on my own; it's my life and my activity, and I don't need anyone's help in making up my mind.
- I would talk to my partner about it, taking strength from his/her support and valuing his/her judgment, which is likely to be based on a good understanding of me and my abilities.
- I would rely heavily on my partner; I have trouble making big life decisions like this.
- I would think about it for a while before discussing it, and would probably abandon the idea before even voicing it.

20. You find out that, after having several drinks, your partner French kissed someone at a party. What would you do?

- Talk it out, be honest about your feelings, but also be quite willing to forgive and forget.
- Break off the relationship immediately; this is completely unacceptable.
- Back off the relationship for a while and see how things develop over time, being prepared to break up if that seems warranted.
- Pretend it didn't happen because it doesn't hurt if you don't allow yourself to think about it.

21. You just got a new job. Everything is novel, challenging, somewhat scary, and you're under a lot of pressure. What would you do?

- Talk to my partner about it, because he/she is thoughtful and sympathetic and may have good ideas about how to deal with this.
- Go to a job counselor or therapist, without bothering my partner; it's not his/her problem.
- Ask my partner to comfort me on evenings when I'm upset, let me 'ventilate' my feelings a little, and pay more attention to me since I'm a bit vulnerable right now.
- Consider talking to my partner but worrying that he/she won't be very receptive.

22. One day, your partner leaves his/her cell phone at your house on accident. It vibrates and you can't help but look at it. It's a text message that says, "Last night was awesome! I've never felt so good!" When you look at who it's from, it's from his chemistry class study partner. How do you react?

- You get really angry at your partner. The stories about late-night study sessions were all lies.
- You decide to begin a secret affair with someone you've been eyeing for months.
- Talk openly with your partner about it; it may or may not be what it looks like, and both of you can talk sensibly about it in either case.
- Feel devastated, as if the earth had just been pulled out from under you; the person you had relied on so completely doesn't care about you at all.

23. You are sick with the flu, staying in bed, and feeling helpless and needy, but your partner doesn't seem to be very caring. What would you do?

- Call or go see my doctor on my own without bothering my partner; after all, he/she isn't my parent.
- Talk to my partner about it, and gently tell him that I'm offended, because usually he/she is warm and considerate, but this time he/she isn't.
- Test my partner's devotion by asking him/her to cook for me, take me to the doctor, and stay home with me in the evening; a partner's loyalty is best measured in times of sickness and misery.
- Get really angry about it; this is no way to treat a loved one.

24. You're going to an important meeting where you have to give a major talk. You're nervous and afraid you're going to blow it. What would you do?

___ Give the talk a couple of times to my partner, because he/she can help me with it and also buck up my courage.

___ Keep rehearsing the talk on my own without bothering my partner.

___ Tell my partner how scared I am and ask him/her to attend the meeting with me, because his/her presence will give me a lot of support.

___ Try to squelch my feelings of nervousness; this is not a reasonable way to feel.

25. After a long Christmas vacation, your partner calls and tells you he/she needs to talk to you about something important and wants you to come over; it can't be discussed on the phone. What would you do?

___ Assume he/she wants to give you a present or some good news, possibly to talk about getting married.

___ Assume he/she has met someone else and wants gently to break up with you.

___ It's probably nothing; I will wait and see what's on his/her mind.

___ Think there is a problem in the relationship and worry until you get together to see what's the matter.