

Learn to accept it's The End

When a relationship has run its course, experts say it is healthy to acknowledge that it's time to let go

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Do relationships have a shelf life? Some do and that's the inescapable truth. Clinging to a relationship after its expiry date is like eating cottage cheese months after its 'use-by' date. It can poison your system, claim experts.

A perfect example of this was currently played on the Indian tennis court before a national audience. All hell broke loose on June 15 when the All India Tennis Association (AITA) announced that Grand Slam-winning doubles pair Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi would be India's doubles entry for the upcoming London Olympics. The two players were once besties and shared an enviable relationship on and off the court. But since 2006, their relationship had gone from bad to worse. The real reasons are still speculative and mysterious; now they can hardly breathe the same air. Yet, they were forced to play together for the country every now and then even as their relationship was hurtling towards the 'no-return' zone. The ball of hope, of these two mending their relationship, was smashed when Hesh and Lee were picked, as a team, to represent the country in the forthcoming Olympics.

Hesh refused, wanting to pair only with Bopanna, with whom he shares a winning partnership. Lee played the diplomat, though not his dad who jumped in to stir the pot. Then somewhere down the line, the gloves were off, and accusations were flying back and forth. By now the audience developed a tennis-neck watching the Shakespearean tragedy involving two stellar players who once shared a magical relationship, unfolding.

'Once'—the key word that prefixes some relationships in our lives. Experts say, sometimes it is healthy to accept and acknowledge that a relationship has run its course and that it's time to let go and move on.

RELATIONSHIP IN TROUBLE

Any kind of relationship is between two people and only they can decide if and when it is completely broken. 'One of the first signs, though, is absence of communication. Whatever the differences may be, if people can express openly and honestly, if they



Blaming the partner won't help you

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agree to disagree and still listen to each other, most problems can be resolved. Second most important ingredient in any relationship is trust. If they feel they cannot trust each other, it is time to evaluate the relationship. Thirdly, if one or both partners feel disrespected then they need to confront the issue,' says Meera Ravi, relationship counsellor.

'When there is not enough intimacy (or understanding), spending time with each other leads to more aggravation and discomfort, then it is time to review,' says Dr Vijay Nagaswami, psychiatrist and author of '24x7 Marriage' and '3's A Crowd'.

How to identify a relationship that has run its course?

Are you and your partner fighting all the time? One of you is constantly questioning what the other says or does? Do you have incompatible goals, like you want more children while he does not? You want to shift abroad, but he wants to stay put? When you are together, there is nothing much to say and you have fallen into a routine worthy of a couple who have been married for 40 years. These signs say you've lost interest in the relationship.

WHY RELATIONSHIPS BREAKDOWN

1. Jealousy — It occurs when there is a feeling of separation and competition.
2. Dominating your partner — Problems emerge when one tries to dominate the relationship. A strong relationship is based on understanding and no expectations.
3. Selfishness — Being selfish leads to ignoring others needs and one becomes egocentric. Try not to dominate conversations and listen to what your partner has to say.
4. Nit picking — A successful relationship needs a certain tolerance of the other's weakness. Before you get into any relationship, it is important to accept each other with their flaws. Change yourself only if you want to.

HOW TO MOVE ON AND AWAY FROM A RELATIONSHIP THAT'S OVER:

- a) Accept that the relationship is over. Think positive. When thoughts change, feelings will too. Say 'I have done my best. I could not have done anything better'. Go out with friends and family for dinner. Take a walk with a friend. Do not sit on your couch and sob because that will lengthen the healing process. Eat and sleep well. Do some exercise. Explore yourself. Remember that you are an individual who has goals and aspirations. Ask yourself what is that you want out of life. Care for others. When you focus on other's needs you forget your pain.
- b) Identify and acknowledge your feelings. Identify the negative feeling. Never say 'I felt a little bad but it is okay'. This will never help. Accept the feeling. If you have had a till with a friend then ask yourself, should I talk to my friend directly or talk to someone else and express the negative feelings in detail.
- c) Talk to someone trustworthy who can show unconditional acceptance and listen with empathy. When you are upset, you need someone who is not going to be judgemental. When you say, 'I



never accepted this from a friend, you need someone to understand your feelings. Who is wrong is immaterial at that time. After some time, you might realise that it was anger.

- d) The most important thing is to make sure you have a closure. If you can talk to the person and say goodbye to each other and amicably decide that these were the reasons why we are not together, it will help end the relationship. Unfinished business will linger in the mind. Speak to a therapist. Tell the therapist these are the things that have hurt and then work on it. While talking to the therapist, you might end up crying or screaming, which will help you heal. When you make peace with yourself, it will help with closure.

When a relationship is over, remember,

that events coexist. It is two people who contribute to a particular situation, hence:

DON'T

- a) Blame the other person. Do not indulge in character assassination. It is unlikely that one person has caused the trauma. You cannot blame one person for a problem. Take over of your problems.
- b) Disrespect the other person in front of others. Do not tarnish the image of the person on social networking sites or friends. Tomorrow you might calm down and say 'I shouldn't have done this but it is not possible to take back what the world has already read or friends have witnessed. Never react and respond to anger at that moment. It is just a temporary phase. Feelings keep changing.

HOW LONG SHOULD ONE TRY TO FIX A RELATIONSHIP?

It is difficult to specify a time period. Ideally, both should equally feel the need to mend the relationship. It is important to accept that the relationship has reached its end. If, after self-reflection and evaluation, you conclude that the relationship has reached a dead end, then for the better of mental health it is essential to accept the reality. Severing a relationship in which you've invested time, energy and, most importantly, emotions, can be very hard and may give rise to many negative feelings. 'Over time, the hurt and anger can turn into resentment, which may lead to bitterness. One cannot build a new relationship on the foundation of bitterness. To have clear, healthy relationships in future it is absolutely necessary to remove the stains of an old relationship,' says Meera.