

Is smoking an absolute dating dealbreaker?

- Absolutely. I won't date a chimney.
- Probably. That's a lot to overlook.
- No. It doesn't bother me.
- I'd actually prefer to date a smoker.

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Falling in love is glorious, but making it last for a lifetime isn't so easy. Why do some couples fall out of love but not others — and what can you do to prevent it? Experts weigh in below.

By Laura Schaefer

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"When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's amore!" sang Dean Martin. We all know the delicious feeling of new love, but what about the flip side? Love doesn't always last, and its retreat can leave us bewildered, confused or downright depressed.

Even if you were raised on a plentiful diet of fairy tales, you know that "till death do us part" can be a rare thing. Even staying with someone forever is no guarantee of experiencing lasting love. But why do people *really* fall out of love? Is there anything we can do to make love stay? Do some of us give up too easily? To understand the phenomenon of love's end, we asked the experts' opinions on the subject. Here are the top three reasons they shared with us:

It is much easier to address issues earlier in a relationship than later

1. Letting a distancing "Wave" topple a good thing.

Ken Page, psychotherapist and author of the *Finding Love* blog for *Psychology Today* and founder of the *Deeper Dating* website, has identified a phenomenon that can destroy new love: "The 'Wave' occurs when we unconsciously push a caring and available person away by inwardly diminishing his or her worth." Think about how Carrie Bradshaw behaved when she first started dating Aidan Shaw: Aidan was "too available" and Carrie freaked because she wasn't used to being with someone so open.

"When someone is available and decent," Page explains, "something inside us knows [this person] can get to our nest, our soul — the place where we care the most and can be hurt the most. And our unconscious gets panicked." If you find yourself breaking up with someone awesome for no good reason, check yourself; you might be acting out of fear.

Want to stay in love forever?

Experts suggest doing these three things on a regular basis:

Speak up when something seems "off" with your partner.

"It is important to speak up at the first sign [that] your partner is becoming disengaged," says Winch. "Trust your gut instinct; if things feel different between you, or if the other person feels withdrawn, bring it up and give [your partner] total permission to voice dissatisfactions. Allow [him or her] to complete those thoughts and don't try to cut [your partner] off midway by arguing, defending, explaining

After all, real love is a big deal. It involves a leap of faith, and that can be a scary thing. Those who give in to the Wave fall out of love before they even give themselves a chance to fall properly *in* love, and that's kind of sad.

2. Refusing to discuss relationship problems.

OK, let's say you've taken that leap and you're in a long-term, committed relationship. Good for you! Now, don't forget to communicate with your partner regularly. *Guy Winch*, Ph.D., author of *The Squeaky Wheel: Complaining the Right Way to Get Results, Improve Your Relationships and Enhance Self-Esteem*, says that people fall out of love because they don't talk through their relationship peeves with each other: "Research shows that couples who are able to voice complaints well and discuss them productively have greater marital satisfaction and much lower divorce rates than couples who are unable to do so." If you're in a newer relationship, iron out the kinks early on to keep love alive over the long haul. "It is much easier to address issues earlier in a relationship than later, just as it is much

or excusing [anything]."

Keep things fresh.

"Bring novelty and romance into the relationship," advises Praver. "It is sexy. Vary the places you go, the activities and your friends. Bring excitement and adventure into your love life. Try making love in different places at different times and in different positions."

Listen and grow together as a couple.

"The greatest thing you can do to strengthen your bond with your partner is to listen to his or her needs, desires and dreams," offers Page. "And to not take each other for granted. To stretch in how much you give, but also in how much you allow yourself to receive."

harder to mold cement once it has dried and hardened," explains Winch.

The key word here, however, is "productively." It usually doesn't help to fight and blame your partner for all of the relationship's problems. Dr. Fran Praver, author of *The New Science of Love: How Understanding Your Brain's Wiring Can Help Rekindle Your Relationship*, says that "when couples play the blame game, they wage a war of being right where both parties lose. It may seem like a strong personality to insist on being right, but in fact 'rightness' is born out of rigidity and weakness, not strength." Couples fall out of love when they can't find a way to make the partnership good for both people who are in it. Creativity and open minds are the stuff of lasting love; silence and blaming, though? Not so much.

3. People change or get bored with each other.

April Masini, the relationship expert behind [AskApril.com](#) and author of *Romantic Date Ideas*, says: "Over time, people can change — or more often, they become who they really are. Someone who loved his steady business career may suddenly realize he always wanted to be a stand-up comedian and throw caution to the wind

to chase his dreams." People evolve; circumstances change — and sometimes, relationships can't be sustained as a result. But if you *really* know your partner at his or her core, the changes won't be as shocking to you. "The kind of change that leads to love lost is always about a buried desire to be someone that's repressed inside," continues Masini. "It's important to really know your partner to avoid this lost-love syndrome." In other words, don't neglect the person you love. You cannot get to know a person thoroughly right away — rather, it's a lifelong journey. There's a whole universe inside that person you love, and if you don't check in with that individual on a regular basis, you could wake up one day hearing this: "I'm unhappy. I'm moving to another country to start my life over fresh, and you're not invited."

If you find *yourself* perusing faraway subtleties and thinking, "He's changed!" or "I'm just so bored with her," think about holding on and digging a little deeper first. "At a certain point in a relationship, according to Imago Couples Therapy," says Page, "each partner feels that the thing they most need from their partner is the very thing that their partner can't give. At that point, many people feel that the relationship has run its course and they leave. The reality, however, is much different. This can be the beginning phase of an entirely new level of intimacy, if they each decide to learn to grow and try to give that partner what [he or she needs most]."

Then again, love doesn't necessarily have to last decades (or a lifetime) to matter. Romantic relationships can also evolve into dear friendships — and that's perfectly fine. Dr. Lissa Coffey, author of the book, *Closure and the Law of Relationship: Endings as New Beginnings*, agrees. "We may come together for a certain period of time to help each other learn and grow, and when that has been accomplished, we've gotten everything we were meant to get out of the relationship. Then it changes," Coffey explains. "It doesn't have to end; it's just redefined."

Laura Schaefer is the author of *The Secret Ingredient* and *Planet Explorers Chicago*.

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