We love each other, but we fight all the time... [1]

Dear Alice,

I've never done this before so here it goes.

I've been dating my current boyfriend for about 8 months, and we do love each other very much. However, I believe we both want very different things from our relationship, and we fight on a regular basis. We fight about everything from spending time with friends to how we feel we are being treated and so forth.

We have a lot of trouble identifying with each other and being considerate of each other's needs. Should I move on and accept that we are incompatible, or should we try a new approach?

? confused

Answer

Dear confused,

You're definitely not the only person struggling to sort through whether it makes sense to stay in a relationship. It's often a big step to acknowledge to others that you're having relationship troubles, so it's brave of you to write in. Hopefully, some reflection and conversation with your partner can help you decide what to do.

Have you talked with your boyfriend about the situation? It'd be helpful to know whether you're on the same page about whether you want to keep the relationship going, whether you see that there are problems, and whether you're both willing to try to make changes in your behavior to work things out.

If you're both dedicated to making changes, you might start by practicing your listening skills. Take turns listening to each other describe what's important to you in a relationship and a partner and what you value about the relationship you have. Rather than focusing on your own feelings, take time to probe and understand what the other person thinks and feels. If you practice this skill when the topic's upbeat, it may help you be more empathetic and considerate when the going gets tough.
If you can figure out what you both want from your relationship, it may be time to move on to talking about how you want your relationship to change. Conflict isn't always negative, but it's important to find healthy ways to address it. Here are some ideas:

- Express your feelings, and take time to listen to the other person's. If you let frustration fester for a long time, things usually get ugly.
- Be specific about what you want, and be willing to compromise.
- Stick to one topic at a time? it's not fair or realistic to bombard your partner with a whole laundry list of complaints.
- Avoid accusations. Instead, focus on certain actions and how they made you feel.

Including an outside person (like a counselor or mediator) might help you reconcile some of your differences or offer a neutral perspective. It's really hard to change behavior patterns in general, and probably impossible for you to change your boyfriend's behavior if he's not motivated to change himself. If you aren't both invested, it may be time to move on.

Alice!
Category:
Relationships [2]
Relationship Stuff [3]
Relating & Communicating [4]

Related questions

Love without harmony [5]
Should I stay or should I go? [6]
Stay with boyfriend or move on? [7]
Breaking up can be hard to do [8]
"True love"? could it be true? [9]
Why aren't we ?In a Relationship? online? [10]

Published date:
Oct 20, 2006
Last reviewed on:
May 26, 2015
Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/we-love-each-other-we-fight-all-time#comment-0

Links