

To my amazing Aunt Ilene,

After some lengthy discussions with my coworkers and contemplating how to best live life with my friends, I wanted to write a letter that goes into depth of the things that I've learned and the journey I've taken so far. This is more therapeutic for me than anything. If you do read it, I hope it's inspiring. You can see my good and bad choices to understand a bit more behind the scenes of the stories you hear. :D Love you all!

Green Flags in the men I'm looking for based on my past relationships:

The small things.

Pay attention to these. If they care enough to do these things they are actively putting in effort for you which is a very good thing. You should also step up to do these things as well. Don't just expect men to obsess over you and treat you like a princess. It's a new era of equality and if you're not also striving to be a better person for your partner, you are just as in the wrong. Just because you're a woman does not mean you're entitled to a man with 6 figures, 6 ft tall 6... you get the idea. Living is more expensive than ever and putting even more pressure on the men when women want equal rights is laughable.

- holding open doors
- taking your dishes/offering to help you in some way
- buying small, thoughtful gifts every now and then without you asking
- offering the booth seat at a restaurant table

Respect.

- doesn't put you in a situation you feel uncomfortable with
- watches your verbal and physical cues to ensure you feel safe
- asks for consent

What not to settle for:

Now, my list of deal-breakers used to be much larger. But if I learned anything from interacting with so many people over the years, it's that people change. A lot.

And they won't be the same person you liked all those years ago, because now they'll stop being all lovey-dovey, they'll intentionally get on your nerves just to get a reaction, they'll break your trust, you'll start noticing they never replace the toilet paper no matter how many times you tell them... etc. etc. What I've found most important in a relationship is actively striving to be better people together. Loyalty, teamwork & a progressive mindset. Now most people say communication, but that sh** is hard. Your partner will make you mad, you'll have different schedules, one of you will want to talk more and the other less, sometimes you'll repeat things and the other partner will hate the fact that you're having to revisit things again.

having a strong addiction to anything and a desire to do nothing about it.

Particularly:

- porn
- drugs
- alcohol
- video games

This sh** messes with your head. No matter how much your partner loves you, there will always be something more that comes first. And it's not intentional, it's just their physical/mental/emotional needs because they stuck themselves in a crappy environment and will have to pay for it because of our human pattern-seeking brains. If they change and have a saint mindset later, it is possible for your partner to completely turn their life around and be a better person. It's just a painful and tedious process, so please, don't sell yourself short like I did.

Spoken from experience, one of my partners had a strong porn addiction. We made an agreement for him to continue it because he quite literally needed it to function. In hindsight, that was one of my first mistakes. I was against the concept but thought he would come around if I kept bringing up why porn is so bad for your brain, how it affects you physically/sexually later in life and some other things I won't delve too deeply into.

YOU CANNOT CHANGE SOMEONE. Ok?

The only way people change is if they want to. No amount of talking/gaslighting is going to do the trick. Give them time.... It may be a hell a long time... but they'll come around if they want to.

Men who:

- 'have to be right'
- have to win every argument
- are intimidated by intelligent women
- are actively sexist

Now the 'have to be right' thing... this goes both ways.

Just some general advice, don't let pride get in the way of your love. One of you is more knowledgeable in areas where the other isn't. You're both from different backgrounds, different areas of life, with different experiences. Don't do what I did and make fun of your partner for not knowing things. It'll bite you back.

In one of my relationships, it got to the point where we were keeping tally of who had won more arguments and he was so proud of his higher score. To the point that it would surpass any new argument because of his self-proclaimed status.

That's when it has gone waay too far.

It's one thing to know more than someone. It's another to beat them down because of what they don't know, or how much 'better' you are than them. Like c'mon.

Competitiveness is cool until it's you vs them.

- Compares your body to others

Some of my own red flags:

Even after giving all this useful advice, I want to recognize my own biases and take a step back to describe what I needed to work on.

- Pride

I too often pride myself in being able to do things and sometimes I really need to take a step back, have some patience, and learn how to do it correctly instead of just being so determined to accomplish a task.

- The need to win a game to feel good about myself

Now this was one of my dealbreakers for a while until I realized, I myself do this too often. I'll be playing games with someone and if I'm getting beat constantly without a single win, I feel less as a person. I know this isn't true, but I like that dopamine rush and feeling good that I accomplished something at the end of the day. I noticed it's worse around other prideful people so I try to limit my interactions with people like that.

It's never 'just a game' sometimes, and I need to work on that T_T

- Stress

If someone tells me I need to be stressing about something I wasn't aware of, I will panic

And then I will basically shut down. It's bad.

I try not to get stressed easily, because I know when I do, it overrides all my senses and it's very hard to think rationally or respond in a kind/reasonable way.

One of my involuntary responses is crying. My body enters a state of such high levels of panic, crying is one way to counter-react and it ultimately helps me calm down afterwards.

But trying to reason with me while I'm in this state is fruitless and I know I need to actively work on ways of removing myself healthily from a situation so I can take the next steps.

Made by two of my coworkers:

Jamie Simplist

Dealbreakers

- Cheating
- Dishonest about conflict
- Toxically intimidated by Jamie or other women
- Addicted to porn, video games, or drugs (caffeine is fine)
- Needs to be right/win every argument
- Actively sexist
- As racist as grandpa
- Extremist in any opinion
- Objectifies women/constantly compares Jamie to other women in a demeaning way
- Vegan or vegetarian (he gotta eat what she cooks or else)
- Dying of cancer in three years
- Keeps secrets
- Extremely religious
- Bisexual
- Calls Jamie a "bitch" ever
- Makes Jamie uncomfortable and is unwilling to compromise

Red flags

- Plays video games until 3am
- Mood disorder
- Has a girl best friend that is controlling/ is too attached to
- Debt for life

- Wants more than 2 kids
- Impatient (in the gym too)
- Emotionally immature
- Long-distance
- Tries to kiss on the first date

Green flags

- Open mind, can change mind
- Morning person/willing to be one
- Positivity
- Goes Dutch (exception: special occasions)
- Different taste in music
- Able to spend more money
- Little signs of affection/acts of service/verbal affection/physical affection
- Keep dating even past marriage

Beige flags

- Kinky
- Bad taste in media
- Debt
- Very expensive gifts

Bonus Features

- Not racist
- Not homophobic
- Short king guys (no giants... 6' is pushing it. Has to see eye to eye if she stands on tiptoes)
- Wears suits
- Glasses 🦋🦋
- Could beat in a fight (both ways)
- Muscular
- CS Major
- Variety (a bit of excitement)