

## Your Own Relationship Beliefs: A Short Quiz

Answer true or false to each of the following statements. It's best if you give your initial quick response because that will more accurately reflect your behavior in your relationship.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ When my partner and I are in conflict, we're both obligated to work it out then and there.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ If my partner insults me, then he/she is to blame if I attack in retaliation.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ My own needs are minimal. It's more important to meet my partner's needs.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ It's a duty in my relationship to avoid conflict whenever I can.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ It's a responsibility to love my partner.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ We should resolve arguments before going to bed.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ It's OK to lie to keep the peace if I know my partner will otherwise get very angry.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I should be generous by deferring to my partner whenever we have conflicting needs.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel selfish if I ask for what I want in a relationship.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ If my partner yells at me first, then it's good to yell back to show that he/she isn't the boss.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I'm more comfortable doing chores and fulfilling responsibilities for my relationship than indulging in "fun."
12. \_\_\_\_\_ It's my partner's obligation not to leave me alone when I'm upset.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ One should provide sex to one's partner because it's a marital responsibility.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ If we're doing all the right things, then we should remain in love forever.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ It's my obligation not to leave my partner alone if he/she is upset.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ All my sacrifices for my partner build up my entitlement to be loved.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Working together through all of life's problems is a great way to grow love and affection.

Now total up all the items for which you answered true. This total score indicates the degree to which your intuitive beliefs deviate from an integrity-based relationship model. Let's revisit each of the questions along with a brief explanation about what each question actually reveals.

1. **When my partner and I are in conflict, we're both obligated to work it out then and there.** There's no such obligation, and this belief will actually prevent you from postponing a conflict until you both are more stable. When emotions are running too high, it's important to temporarily stop the argument and stabilize yourselves.
2. **If my partner insults me, then he/she is to blame if I attack in retaliation.** If you attack in retaliation, then you're starting to fight in order to avoid shame. The problem is that your partner will probably feel the same defensive need to counter your attack. Then both of you are locked into a rigid blaming dance.
3. **My own needs are minimal. It's more important to meet my partner's needs.** One responsibility in a relationship is to keep a good, equitable balance of meeting both of your needs. Habitual self-sacrificing isn't responsible to either yourself or the relationship. Your relationship doesn't need you to covertly resent inequity or possibly even lose your sense of self.
4. **It's my duty in my relationship to avoid conflict whenever I can.** It's your responsibility to avoid unnecessary and unproductive conflict such as fighting to establish dominance. It's also your responsibility to risk certain conflicts in order to re-balance your relationship.
5. **It's my responsibility to love my partner.** It's your responsibility to contribute to a safe environment that will allow affection to grow. It's not your responsibility to try to "squeeze" out emotions that you can't directly control. If you make love a responsibility, you will contaminate your love with guilt. It's a bad mix that can lead to emotional impotence. Don't do it.

6. **We should have arguments resolved before going to bed.** What a popular and destructive myth. (See the explanation for #1.)
7. **It's OK to lie to keep the peace if I know my partner will otherwise get very angry.** This behavior is very destructive. You will hurt your own integrity and accumulate shame. Over time, this will cause you to emotionally withdraw from the relationship. You will also destroy your partner's trust.
8. **I should be generous by deferring to my partner whenever we have conflicting needs.** It's a good idea to be generous and deferential to your partner much of the time. However, sometimes you need to hang tough for a need that's very important to you. It's your responsibility to weigh both your partner's need and your own from a heterocentric perspective. A heterocentric view considers the relative balance of both of your needs together.
9. **I feel selfish if I ask for what I want in a relationship.** This indicates the presence of core shame. If you feel selfish when you advocate for your own desires, then you have a serious threat to your relationship. Your relationship will fall out of balance when you gradually lose your sense of autonomy and identity. Your expression of self interest is necessary if you want to maintain your attraction to your partner.
10. **If my partner yells at me first, then it's good to yell back to show that he/she isn't the boss.** If you yell back, then you're not focusing on managing your own emotions. You've lost your autonomy by trying to prove that you're not the victim. By trying to avoid shame you will only provoke damaging escalation in the fight.
11. **I'm more comfortable doing chores and fulfilling responsibilities for my relationship than indulging in "fun."** Keeping your "fun" self alive in the relationship is a responsibility of keeping the relationship balanced. If you turn into a depressive drone, then you won't be able to keep your passion alive, and you won't be attractive to your partner.
12. **It's my partner's obligation not to leave me alone when I'm upset.** No, no, no! It's your own responsibility to self-stabilize. It's one of the basic ingredients of autonomy. It's nice if your partner can soothe you but sometimes he/she may feel too angry or hurt. Nurturing you when you're upset needs to be a completely voluntary and elective act by your partner.
13. **One should provide sex to one's partner because it's a marital responsibility.** The operative words here are "provide" and "responsibility." The implication is that it's not really for ourselves. We're now doing it as a chore and using it as a tool to achieve another goal to avoid the shame of otherwise being an inadequate spouse or incurring the wrath of the partner. In this way, the provision of sex as a responsibility is motivated by fear. It's a contamination of emotional reflexes that's damaging over time.
14. **If we're doing all the right things, then we should remain in love forever.** It's well known that the titanic "in-love" feelings originate more from projection and anticipation than reality. Within two to three years of living with each other, frustrating each other, stepping on each other's toes, and bruising each other, most couples are no longer "in-love." It's a nice condiment to be enjoyed while it lasts. However, the main fare is sentimental loving that must be earned through mutual respect and skilled relationship craft.
15. **It's my obligation not to leave my partner alone if he/she's upset.** (See # 12).
16. **All my sacrifices for my partner build up my entitlement to be loved.** You are deserving of love, but you are not "entitled" to demand love from anyone. If you feel entitled to be loved, you will be set up to feel rage whenever your expectations aren't met. Love isn't a bartered commodity. It's a

feeling that needs to be freed from fear and shame. All your work in a relationship is to create conducive conditions for love to blossom on its own. If you miss one of the necessary conditions (e.g. respect for your partner's autonomy), love may not bloom. Even if you meet all of the conditions, your partner may still have limitations and be incapable of love.

17. **Working together through all of life's problems is a great way to build love and affection.** Actually, it's a relatively poor way to grow love and affection. Slaving away together is often necessary for survival. However, our emotional state during work makes it difficult to grow much affection. Affection is more easily grown in the free states of wonder, curiosity, and play.

I hope that this short self-examination has helped you to examine some of your intuitively-based assumptions about how relationships should run. Unfortunately, many people have impaired relationships because they expect constant love.