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## Deal Breakers: When to Work On a Relationship and When to Walk Away

By Dr. Bethany Marshall



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This is a book about men. Not all men, just emotionally unhealthy men. The ones who make you question, “Is it him or is it me? Am I making too big a deal out of this? I try to tell him how I feel, but he says I’m overreacting or needy or it’s all my fault.”

Relationships are hard work, but how hard should they be? When do you know you are struggling too hard to make a relationship succeed?

*Deal Breakers* is about getting out of this “relationship purgatory”—where the present is unfulfilling and the future is the only thing you can hope for. But there is no magic future. If he won’t work on problems today, it’s unlikely they’ll ever be resolved. And passively hoping for change will only cost you years of depression or expensive therapy.

Dr. Bethany Marshall is here to remind women that relationships—like business relationships—are deals. In the business world, a deal breaker is the one nonnegotiable term that, if not agreed to, means the deal is off. But in the world of relationships, identifying your deal breaker can be much more promising, as it holds out the possibility of helping you to understand where the relationship has gone wrong, what needs to be done in order to make it better, and when to walk away because you’re doing more work than him to fix it.

A deal breaker is a boundary that smart people set for themselves because they know that falling in love can make them do stupid things. Through case studies, deal breaker scenarios, and suggested courses of action, *Deal Breakers* expertly guides frustrated women. By defining your deal breaker, you hold all the power to create the happiness you deserve.



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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"Renée Raudman is perfect for this production. She delivers...with emotional balance and an intimate sense of authority over the material." ---AudioFile

### About the Author

Bethany Marshall, PhD, PsyD, MFT has been in private practice as a marriage, family, and child therapist in both Beverly Hills and Pasadena for the past eighteen years. She regularly appears as a contributing psychological commentator on *Good Morning America*, *The Early Show*, and Leeza Gibbons's nationally syndicated radio show, "Hollywood Confidential," and is a weekly commentator for Nancy Grace on CNN Headline News.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **What's Your Deal?**

What do you absolutely want out of your relationship? Do you know?

You may consider yourself wise, self-sufficient, and a good judge of character. Your girlfriend's troubled love life always seems transparent and filled with unnecessary drama. But when faced with your *own* murky relationship waters, the easy answers seem to disappear.

Perhaps it is easy to analyze your girlfriend's relationship because what constitutes a deal breaker for her may not necessarily constitute a deal breaker for you. Conversely, a romantic situation that seems like nirvana to you might feel like sheer hell for her.

So how can you judge a true deal breaker?

A deal breaker is a character flaw or emotional stance that significantly deteriorates the quality of a relationship. Note: Deal breakers are not minor annoying habits such as your boyfriend's chewing with his mouth open or your husband's endlessly quoting sports statistics. Rather, they are qualities that erode your most cherished aspirations for a satisfying love relationship.

But in order to spot a deal breaker, you must first have a deal. By this, I mean that you must know what you hope to get out of a relationship (other than two carats in a platinum setting). Knowing what you want is important because all relationships are built upon arrangements. Some are financial arrangements. Some are emotional arrangements. Some are marital arrangements. Some are sexual arrangements. Your relationship may contain some, or all, aspects of the arrangements just mentioned. Arrangements are best when they are agreed upon by both parties and flexibly negotiated over time.

But what if you don't know what you want? Or you settle for an arrangement that makes you unhappy? Or you grew up in a household where nothing was discussed or explored, so you never learned to ask for what you wanted?

## [Nicky's story]

Nicky, a twenty-two-year-old graduate student, came to therapy because she felt anxious about her "dating" relationship. I put "dating" in quotes because Nicky revealed to me that her relationship consisted primarily of watching late-night TV together, cuddling until four in the morning, and then having sex. After these nights of so-called passion, her boyfriend would disappear and forget to call her for several days.

This was not a dating relationship. This was a booty call! But Nicky was young and naive, and had not yet articulated to herself what she wanted out of a relationship. Thus, she could not spot a deal breaker even though it was staring her straight in the face.

I broached the subject of deal breakers by educating Nicky about normal dating relationships; namely, that a man's willingness to call in advance and take a woman to dinner is an indicator of his willingness to invest his emotions in her. Nicky's newfound knowledge helped her realize that she was in a sexual arrangement, not a dating arrangement. Once she acknowledged that she wanted a boyfriend instead of a sex buddy, she realized that his lack of emotional investment was a deal breaker. She told him that she wanted an exclusive dating relationship that involved dinners out and time spent with mutual friends, but she could tell by his reluctance that he was not "The One."

If you think back to the last time you were unhappy in a relationship, there is a great likelihood that your partner was doing something that undermined the arrangement you were hoping for. For example, if your boyfriend consistently refused to attend family holidays, then he was probably ruining your hopes of a relationship arrangement that included interest in each other's life and a possible future together. If he continually questioned your decisions, he could have been undermining your dreams of a relationship built upon trust. If he flew into irrational jealous rages, then he was possibly dashing your hopes of being in a stable relationship arrangement.

*A deal breaker is not a deal breaker unless it destroys something that is precious to you.*

But deal breakers are emotional, so they're easy to miss. They're feelings, so there's nothing to sign. And they can be difficult to talk about, because they're typically unspoken.

Here are some important aspects of common relationship arrangements and the deal breakers that can destroy them:

You need autonomy.

He wants to oversee and approve your friendships and date book.

You are ambitious.

Not only has he been in the same job for fifteen years, but his uniform still includes a paper hat.

You need a relationship where conflicts are discussed and resolved.

To him, resolving conflicts means getting you to put a sock in it.

You want to feel special.

He is withholding and cheap.

You need consistency. You want to know that when you see him, he is the same person he was the last time you saw him.

He is so moody that you are convinced he has PMS.

You like the idea of monogamy.

He's faithful, but when he sees another woman his tongue unfurls like a cartoon rodent's.

And so it is with deal breakers. One person has a need. The other will not fulfill it. One person wants to get married. The other person does not. One person wants fidelity. The other does not. One person wants freedom. The other is only interested in control.

*Deal breakers undermine the very conditions that make it possible to love.* And as such, they constitute a warning that the relationship needs either to dissolve or to change. Unfortunately, you may not know what you want out of a relationship. Or if you do, you may feel guilty about creating the situation that works best for you. Thus, you may remain unaware of the factors that make a relationship impossible. But do not be discouraged. Being in a good relationship is not rocket science. By the time you are finished with this book, you will know exactly what you want.

In the meantime, here's a little tidbit to think about. Regardless of the arrangement that you are trying to build for yourself, your healthy relationship should include three important ingredients:

### **1. Reciprocity**

Both of you are equally invested in the relationship.

### **2. Generativity**

The relationship generates something new (a new experience, a new understanding, a new solution) with each encounter -- thus it is always moving forward.

### **3. Honesty**

You feel free to tell him what's on your mind and he responds by revealing his true thoughts, motivations, and intentions. Thus, you continually get to know each other better.

It's a red flag if you have to call your friends or obtain a PhD to decipher what he is trying to communicate to you. For example, you think that you are having a discussion, but you walk away from each conversation feeling confused. Or you worry about whether he's coming clean or telling you the truth. Or you try to communicate with him, but he hears something other than what you said. And you begin to realize that if you cannot communicate about the simplest of things, you might not be able to build a good relationship arrangement together.

## **(THE SIGN)**

Is there one relationship problem that eats away at you, but you don't know why? You keep trying to connect the dots, but you can't -- and you wonder if there's a deeper issue that you are missing? Or whether the problem is serious enough to be considered a deal breaker?

The answer: A deal breaker is not a one-time fight. Nor is it an excuse to put distance between you and him.

*A deal breaker is a sign of everything else that is wrong in a relationship.*

Sometimes, deal breakers erupt into consciousness during one awful moment (like discovering a pile of bounced checks when you have long suspected that he is irresponsible). Or they are characterized by a series of seemingly minor events that add up to one big problem (like many social events during which he inappropriately brags -- worse yet, about his baseball card collection). Often deal breakers surface in social contexts, where it becomes easier to view your partner through the eyes of others you trust.

For instance, Jim entered therapy to understand his inability to assert himself. Although Jim is a brilliant oncologist, he has a poorly defined sense of self. Thus, he is constantly seeking approval and is rarely willing to say what he thinks. In a recent session, Jim described a painful breakup that occurred in his early twenties. He had been dating a girl who overlooked many instances in which Jim had exaggerated his accomplishments in order to gain approval. About one year into the relationship, she introduced Jim to her parents. During the introduction, Jim lied and told them he was a licensed MD when in fact he had not yet attended medical school. His girlfriend became worried and broke off the relationship.

*As I listened to Jim's painful recollection, I thought, Of course she broke up with you! This was a deal breaker! The poor girl had probably been listening to your thinly veiled lies and exaggerations for months. But when she observed you lying to her parents, and was able to view the problem from their perspective, she was finally able to conceptualize everything else that was wrong with the relationship.*

Women who come to me for help initially express surface complaints about the men in their lives:

"For some reason, I hate the way he dresses."

"I don't know why, but I only have road rage when he's in the passenger seat."

"He tells me that he won't spend an entire weekend together. Is it wrong for me to feel upset?"

"He tells me that I am shallow and immature. That really bothers me. Should it?"

"When we have sex, he fixates on my breasts and ignores the rest of me. It hurts my feelings, and I'm not sure why."

When I hear complaints such as these, I usually ask, "What does his unwillingness to spend an entire weekend together mean to you?"...

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Deanna Christianson:**

As people who live in typically the modest era should be upgrade about what going on or data even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era and that is always change and move forward. Some of you maybe can update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice for yourself but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know which one you should start with. This Deal Breakers: When to Work On a Relationship and When to Walk Away is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and need in this era.

**Michelle Mills:**

Playing with family in the park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with friends is thing that usually you could have done when you have spare time, and then why you don't try point that really opposite from that. 1 activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition associated with. Even you love Deal Breakers: When to Work On a Relationship and When to Walk Away, you could enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still want to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout men. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its named reading friends.

**Holly Hughes:**

In this time globalization it is important to someone to acquire information. The information will make professionals understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information easier to share. You can find a lot of references to get information example: internet, classifieds, book, and soon. You will see that now, a lot of publisher that print many kinds of book. Typically the book that recommended for your requirements is Deal Breakers: When to Work On a Relationship and When to Walk Away this publication consist a lot of the information from the condition of this world now. This particular book was represented just how can the world has grown up. The vocabulary styles that writer require to explain it is easy to understand. The particular writer made some investigation when he makes this book. Honestly, that is why this book acceptable all of you.

**Chi Reyes:**

In this era which is the greater man or woman or who has ability to do something more are more treasured than other. Do you want to become certainly one of it? It is just simple way to have that. What you must do is just spending your time not very much but quite enough to enjoy a look at some books. Among the books in the top collection in your reading list will be Deal Breakers: When to Work On a Relationship and When to Walk Away. This book that is qualified as The Hungry Inclines can get you closer in getting precious person. By looking upward and review this book you can get many advantages.

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