Telling the love of my life I need time alone [1]

Hi Alice,

The almost impossible has happened ? I met the most wonderful fella ever! We have so much in common and I feel like I have met my partner for life. But my love wants to spend every weekend together, spend one night together during the week, and go out after work sometimes, too. After the first two months, all of this love and time together is getting a little stifling for me. Last weekend I lied and said I was sick so I could have some time alone. I really want this relationship to work! I don't want hurt his feelings by saying I need a little breathing room, but I don't want to keep making up excuses to spend some time alone. It has been a long time since I was in a relationship and I don't want to muck this one up.

Help!!

Thankful for new found love, but needs to reclaim some solitude!

Answer

Dear Thankful for newfound love, but needs to reclaim some solitude!,

All you need is love? and some ?me? time. You?re not alone in your concerns about spending lots of time with your partner [2], wanting space, and needing more alone time to nurture your sense of self. Maintaining your identity and independence outside the context of your romantic partnership is essential in the preservation of your self-confidence, social network, and ability to contribute to the growth and progress of your relationship. Fortunately, there are many ways for you to express your needs without hurting your partner?s feelings. The key is honest communication and willingness to meet him half way.

Romantic relationships can be exciting and enriching, but no single person can meet all of your needs. Every relationship has ups and downs, and you won?t always be in sync with your partner. Maintaining a balance between your needs and those of your partner takes practice and is an essential component of fostering a healthy relationship.

Your partner has clearly expressed the ideal amount of time he would like to spend with you ? now is the time for you to do the same. Consider the following ideas:

- **Engage in personal reflection.** To prepare for your discussion with your partner ? ask
yourself a few important questions: Ideally, how much time would you like to spend with your partner? Why does that amount of time seem appropriate? What kinds of activities would you like to do with him?

- **Don’t be fearful.** Romantic partners may feel intimidated by conflict and avoid it in an effort to keep the peace. This is especially true of new or budding relationships. You should feel safe expressing your concerns without fear of retaliation and so should your partner.

- **Communicate honestly.** Many relationships suffer from insufficient, dishonest, or ineffective communication. Your desire to be truthful about your needs is crucial in the facilitation of effective communication. Be honest, but while doing so try not to use harsh language. Avoid words that may come off as judgmental or hurtful (e.g., smothering, clingy, etc.).

- **Negotiate and compromise.** It’s a rare event when both or all parties involved in a relationship uniformly agree on the ideal amount of time to spend together. Your partner’s needs and desires are as valid as your own so don’t insist on being right. Try to modify your expectations by taking your partner’s needs into account and try to see things from his perspective. He’s likely to follow suit. A satisfactory compromise might consist of alternating weekends spent together in order to reconnect and spend quality time with friends and loved ones.

- **Reinforce your enthusiasm.** Make sure to convey that even though you want some more personal space, you’re still crazy about your lover. To strengthen your partner’s confidence, consider sandwiching the main substance of the conversation with positive sentiments about him and the relationship.

- **Be transparent.** It’s okay to disagree every now and then. Your partner is not a mind reader and may not pick up on subtle hints. Be clear, straightforward, concise, and try not to stray away from the topic of conversation. Use “I” rather than “you” statements to communicate your feelings without putting your partner down.

Many relationships are stifled by peaceful coexistence; partners habituate to one another, accommodate each other without expressing personal needs, and keep chugging along without vocalizing individual desires. This may result in stagnation or even built up anger and resentment. Release the pressure valve on your relationship before you explode by initiating a calm, open dialogue with your honey. It may also be helpful to discuss these concerns with a professional therapist (either on your own or with your partner). For more information, check out the relationships section of the Go Ask Alice! archives.

Alice!
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