



Is this Love

or Am I Only Staying Because it is Comfortable?

My boyfriend and I have been together for almost 8 years. We have been living together for 7 of those eight years. We work opposite schedules and have done so for the last 7 years. We recently bought a home together and rarely are home at the same time. We only have 1 day per week when we see each other and I am not sure that I can handle it.



He keeps talking about going back to school...I am well on my way in a professional career and he hasn't gotten his feet off the ground. When we met I was only 21 with no job and living at home with my parents. Now, at 29 I have a successful career and have just recently returned to school to complete my degree. I often feel very lonely and recently have been going out on the weekends with my girlfriends. Recently, I met an attractive man who has been asking me to question my happiness in my current relationship. I am not sure if I am in love anymore. I don't know if I am happy and wonder if I have settled for something that is comfortable. How do I know if I am happy....How do I know if I could be happier? I am very confused. Because I have invested so much time in this relationship, I don't want to make a rash decision without really trying to get to the root of my feelings.

Elaine (F) 29
Tacoma, WA.

Dear Elaine-

I commend and respect your value in asking hard questions before leaving a relationship of 7 years. Your story however is not uncommon . Research tells us that the marriages which occur before the age of 28 are at very high risk for divorce. Why? people do a lot of changing and growing from 18-28. You appear to have grown professionally and personally. As often happens, it seems that your boyfriend's growth has not kept pace with yours. In addition, the opposite schedule life that seemed to work well for you at the beginning is no longer manageable.

Start by asking yourself some hard questions;

- What kind of life do I want to have a year or 3years, from now?
- Does this man fit with that life?
- What really works in this relationship?
- What doesn't work?

Sometimes people make columns on a piece of paper to easily illuminate how the relationship is working for them.

Once you have done your work, approach your boyfriend and ask him how the relationship is working for him. Don't be surprised or angry if he thinks it's just fine. Calmly and clearly let him know what you'd like that you're not getting. Give him time to think about it and give you a response.

In terms of your happiness, you can do a similar exercise with a list of

- "I know I'm happy when...",
- and "I believe I'd be much happier if.."
- How am I benefiting from this relationship?
- How is he benefiting?

Be realistic about what is possible with this man or any man.

Accept that it may take some time to sort what is next in your life. Be courageous, face the hard truths and your course of action will become clear. --*Judy Whaling*