

Why Do I Keep Choosing the Same Kind of Person?

Have you ever reached the end of a relationship and thought, *How have I ended up here again?*

The person may have looked completely different from your previous partner. Different personality, different background, different interests. At the beginning, the relationship may even have felt completely different.

And yet, somewhere along the way, something began to feel strangely familiar.

Perhaps you found yourself with someone who didn't communicate, always needed to be right or wanted to do things entirely on their own terms. Maybe they were charming and attentive with other people but very different behind closed doors.

Or perhaps your pattern looks completely different. You repeatedly find yourself with someone who needs constant reassurance, wants to be looked after or struggles to do things without you. You become the person who supports, reassures and carries much of the emotional weight of the relationship.

For others, the familiar pattern may involve control. One person gradually has more power, while the other becomes quieter, more accommodating or less able to express what they want. The people may change. **But sometimes the relationship dynamic stays remarkably similar.**

Why don't I see it at the beginning?

Because the beginning rarely looks like the ending.

When we first meet someone, we're getting to know them. There may be excitement, attraction and lots of attention. We may feel completely enamoured with someone who is charming us, making an effort and showing us how interested they are.

It feels new. And because it feels new, it's very easy to believe:

This is different.

There is also a period at the beginning of many relationships when both people are presenting themselves at their best. We may feel incredibly close to someone quite quickly and believe we know them well, when in reality we're still discovering who they are.

That doesn't mean we should become suspicious of everyone we meet or spend every first date hunting for red flags. But it can be useful to slow down enough to notice what is actually happening rather than only what we hope is happening.

When different isn't actually that different

When someone tells me that their new partner seemed completely different from the others, I'd be curious about that. **What seemed different?**

And then: **How was this relationship different from the last one? And the one before that?**

Rather than comparing the people themselves, it can be useful to compare what happened within those relationships. What was common between them?

Perhaps communication gradually disappeared in each one. Maybe you repeatedly became responsible for keeping the relationship together. Perhaps you found yourself seeking reassurance, walking on eggshells, looking after the other person or continually putting your own needs aside.

You may even begin to remember things that happened early on that didn't feel quite right.

Not necessarily enormous warning signs. Sometimes they're small moments we turn our heads away from because everything else feels so good.

We explain them. We minimise them. Or we tell ourselves that this relationship will be different.

Familiar doesn't necessarily mean healthy

There can be comfort in what we know.

If we've experienced a similar type of relationship several times, we know how to function within it — even if we aren't particularly happy there.

We know how to chase someone who pulls away. We know how to reassure someone who constantly needs us. We know how to keep the peace with someone who doesn't respond well to disagreement. We know what the arguments look like and perhaps even what the making-up afterwards feels like.

It is familiar territory. Changing that pattern can require us to step into something we don't know quite as well. And that can feel uncomfortable.

What if a healthier relationship feels strange?

We often assume that if we finally meet someone who is better suited to us, we'll immediately recognise it. But I'm not sure it's always that simple.

If you're accustomed to relationships filled with emotional highs and lows, someone steady may initially feel less exciting. If you're used to constantly reassuring or caring for someone, being with a person who is independent may leave you wondering where you fit. If you've become accustomed to chasing somebody for attention, someone who communicates openly and consistently might feel unfamiliar.

And sometimes unfamiliarity itself can make us pull away.

Different doesn't always feel better straight away. Sometimes different simply feels unfamiliar.

That doesn't mean every calm relationship is healthy or that excitement is a warning sign. It means that our sense of what feels *normal* can be shaped by what we've experienced before. Recognising that gives us an opportunity to become curious about our choices rather than simply repeating them.

Do your relationships reflect what matters to you?

When we think about finding a partner, we often think about the characteristics we'd like them to have.

Attractive. Funny. Confident. Successful. Interesting. Affectionate. But another question may be just as important: **What do you want the relationship itself to be like?**

Think about the values that matter to you.

If you value communication, does the person you're choosing communicate with you? If you value mutual respect, can both of you disagree without one person always needing to win? If independence matters to you, is there room for both people to have lives and identities of their own? If you value equality, do both people's needs carry weight in the relationship?

Sometimes there can be a gap between the relationship we say we want and the relationship dynamics we repeatedly accept.

Recognising that isn't about blaming yourself for previous relationships. It's about becoming more aware of what you want to choose going forward.

Some questions to think about

You might find it helpful to ask yourself:

- What have my previous relationships had in common?
- What initially attracted me to those people?
- Were there early signs that I noticed but explained away?
- What role do I tend to take within relationships?
- What values are important to me in a relationship?
- Have the people I've chosen shared those values?
- What would a different kind of relationship look like for me?
- And would that difference initially feel unfamiliar?

You don't need to analyse every relationship you've ever had or create a perfect checklist for your next partner. Sometimes simply noticing the pattern is the beginning of making a different choice.

Therapist's Reflection: When someone tells me they keep choosing the same kind of person, I'm often curious about what *same* actually means. Rather than only looking at the people they've chosen, I might ask about the relationships themselves. What felt familiar? What kept happening? What did they need from those relationships that they weren't getting?

I also think it can be helpful to look at values. We often have an idea of the type of person we want, but perhaps we spend less time thinking about the type of **relationship** we want. If communication is important to you, what does good communication actually look like? If you value independence, respect, affection or equality, are those values present in the relationships you're choosing? And perhaps one of the most useful questions isn't simply:

“Why do I keep choosing the wrong person?” but: “What would the right relationship actually look and feel like for me?”

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