

**From Hannah Taylor via Facebook 9/12/21**

I do not look for red flags in others' behavior. That's a losing game--it keeps me focused on the other person and whether their behavior is acceptable.



I look for the red flags in myself, in what I am experiencing and how I am interacting.



My experience is the law when it comes to relationships. My experience is the only reality that matters, because relationships are intimately subjective.



When people talk about red flags, there's often this analysis of how reasonable/unreasonable a behavior is, what the behavior means about now, what the behavior means about the future... none of it is really material to how you will \*feel\* in the relationship.



Some of the red flags in myself that get my attention:



▶ When my voice is high in my throat and high in pitch

This one usually tells me that a woman is not a fit to be my friend. When I feel connected to another woman in friendship, my voice is low and deep. When my voice goes high, some part of me is performing something. I usually investigate what's going on for me, and if it keeps happening, I have limited engagement with that person.



▶ When I explain myself more than once

This one applies to friendships and dating. I am not interested in relating to people who don't understand me on an energetic basis, and sometimes this takes a little verbal explanation to establish. Sometimes when someone understands me, explanation is like whipped cream on top of the delicious connection! But extensive explanation is a sign that I am feeling misunderstood and/or the connection isn't really there. Explaining myself to gain understanding drains my energy and leads to self-doubt, so I don't relate with people when the relationship requires that.



▶ When I set a verbal boundary

My boundaries are mostly energetic, and very effective. It's a red flag for me to feel a need to set a verbal boundary, and it is a dealbreaker if I hear the same boundary come out of my mouth twice. I do not question whether I was clear enough, I simply know that person is not for me.



▶ When I hear stress in my voice

When my throat is tight and I'm speaking with stressed emphasis trying to convince someone of something (usually this goes along with setting a verbal boundary more than once or explaining myself profusely) I understand that communication with this person is not flowing easily and I am tipping into dysregulation. Nervous system dysregulation on this level is a red flag for more profound dysregulation if the relationship continues or deepens.



▶ When I notice myself judging or criticizing the other person

Recently I decided on a rule for myself and my life, "no mean girl energy ever." This applies to me more than anyone else. When I hear my mean-girl energy come out, that is a huge red flag. Sometimes I need to re-center in myself, and sometimes it means the relationship isn't a fit. I want to relate exclusively to people I respect and admire, and it isn't fair to others to invite them into a relationship where they will be silently criticized or judged.



▶ When I notice I have a fear of how they will react or respond to something I say or do

I am not available for relationships that inspire fear or contain punishment or consequences. This one is a sign that trust is missing, that I don't trust them to continually respect me. If I continue to relate to them at a certain level, I am at risk for feeling shame, guilt, and self-doubt.



Here's the super important thing about looking for red flags in yourself--none of this is about condemning the other person. That's what makes it so easy and free to apply.



Nobody is wrong for how they're feeling. Nobody is wrong for how they're behaving. No experience is wrong or unreal or incorrect or unreasonable. Some people are a resonant fit for me and some are not. There is no justification necessary.



You'll also notice that I laid a distinction between a red flag and a dealbreaker. These red flags are sometimes signs that I need to tune myself up in order to relate to the person--get more on my center, have more nourishing conditions, feel safer or more authentic, and they're sometimes signs that I can have only limited interaction with a person.



Dealbreakers mean they are not allowed in my life, full stop.



I don't have to explain my red flags or dealbreakers to anyone, I simply use them to inform my relationships and what I show up for.

