

Who's in Control? 15 Ways to Gauge Your Lover

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So you've fallen in love and the relationship seems to be blossoming. Perhaps you're moving toward a long-term commitment, maybe even marriage? Great! Hooray for love. Hooray for you!

Hold on: Not so fast! I caution you to be sensible as you move toward a committed relationship. It's time to determine if you and your partner have a healthy sense of give-and-take. Without it, you face constant battles ahead over who is controlling what and, in the end, who is controlling whom. Minor control issues when you're dating – battles over what movie to see, and who drives to get there -- can grow into major areas of contention as the relationship matures.

What's your "control factor"? Take the quiz.

Here is my checklist of 15 ways to gauge the "control factor" in your relationship. Ultimately, it is up to you to decide whether taking or giving control in any of these areas is comfortable for you. After you take this short quiz, I will share with you the Big Six areas where control issues present themselves, and what your answers to the following questions indicate.

1. Who picks the restaurant?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
2. Who pours the wine?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
3. Who picks up the tab?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
4. Who tells your friends your favorite joke?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
5. Who initiates kissing?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
6. Who is the first to apologize after a lover's spat?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
7. Who has custody of the remote control device?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
8. Who calls whom?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
9. Who leads on the dance floor?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
10. Who dominates the conversation?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
11. Who selects the car radio station?
 You Him/Her Take Turns
12. Who chooses meal times?

You Him/Her Take Turns

13. Who makes suggestions to whom on what to wear?

You Him/Her Take Turns

14. Who massages whose back?

You Him/Her Take Turns

15. Who selects the weekend's activities?

You Him/Her Take Turns

If most of your answers are "you," you have lots of "take" and not a lot of "give." You may very well hit the wall over control issues later on in the course of your relationship, because your partner may only be able to tolerate your "taking" behavior for a short time.

If your answers included "him/her" much of the time, you are more "give" than "take," and you run the risk of trying to opt for control later on. Ask yourself if you like being controlled. Some people do, but most don't. When dating someone new, many people find it fun when their partner orders for them at a restaurant or selects the weekend activities. But over time, such gestures can make a person feel smothered and controlled.

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If your answers point to mostly "take turns," your relationship has a healthy give-and-take and stands a terrific chance of going the distance. In my experience as a divorce attorney, I find that those who are not willing to "take turns" in many areas will continue to battle during the divorce process on a much grander scale. God forbid, if a couple has children, the control battles can ensue for the rest of their lives.



The Big Six: What are your control issues?

Though this test was short, the 15 questions provide telling clues as to how you deal with what I call "The Big Six" -- those areas in a relationship where control issues typically manifest themselves.

The Big Six are:

- Money
- Children
- Intimacy
- Health
- Growth (personal and professional)
- Fear (physical, emotional and psychological)

If you're the one who always initiates kissing, eventually you and your partner may get into some clashes in the intimacy department. If you have disagreements or resentments during your dating period over who pays for what, you can expect money to eventually top your Big Six list of control issues.

If you're the one who's always rubbing your partner's back, look out! When you become sick, you just may have to make your own chicken soup. And if you're with someone who always picks the restaurant, weekend activities or the radio station -- you're headed for a life with a dominant mate who feels the need to call all the shots.

Someone who steals the limelight to tell a couple's favorite joke may also be the ambitious type, a partner who will always feel the need to keep achieving, and thus growth may become an issue over time.

Fear can override any relationship. Those who are compelled to always apologize, whether it is their fault or not, may, in time, wish to be free of the emotional or psychological bondage they're experiencing.

Before you try to go the distance with your lover, gauge where you stand in the control department on these crucial Big Six issues. Decide what you're willing to give or get -- because if you don't agree early on in your relationship, you may very well have problems once the honeymoon period is over.

