

WHAT TO DO WHEN SHE (HE) LEAVES

Assuming you want her (him) back

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People frequently come to me with this problem. Some years ago I came up with an answer and have not felt the need to change it. It works. Follow the four steps.

1. GIVE UP ALL SIGNS OF PUSHING.

This is very important. Your partner is already moving away. Anything you do to push them will tend to make them move away faster and further. Stop anything that might be construed as pursuing or pressing them. If your instinct is to call them twice a day, start calling them once a week. If your instinct is to send them a gift, do it once a month. If you are trying to find out what they are doing by asking other people, don't. Let your partner contact you when they are ready. (See [Reliable Membership Article](#).)

2. SURVIVE

Do not be surprised that you may feel awful, or sick, or depressed. This is normal when you feel left behind. The feeling will go away – with a lot of time. In the meantime, continue to live your life. Go to work. Eat well. Sleep well. Do more exercise. (It will help you sleep. It will help with any depression you may feel.) Be among friends. While you do this, you might consider staying away from friends of the other gender. If you cannot sleep or seem very depressed, see your doctor. Some medication may be helpful for a while. If your partner speaks to you, don't tell them how hard a time you are having. That will probably not get you the sympathy you want. Just say something like, "Well, it is tough." And say no more.

3. WORK ON YOUR SELF, VISIBLY

See a counselor. Read books. Talk your problems over with friends, your pastor, your priest, your rabbi. Learn what you can. Read my paper on [The Two Walls](#). Chances are there is a lot for you to learn. Most often when a partner leaves, they have been planning it for a long time. You, on the other hand may have been taken by surprise. What led you to be so unaware of your partner? What led you to be so unaware that they were in distress enough to consider leaving you. Try to not blame yourself. All relationship trouble takes two. And so, work on yourself.

And do this work so that your partner knows. The chances are one of the reasons they are leaving you is because they believe you will never change. By visibly working on yourself, they have to wonder what you are doing and who you are becoming. That is much better than their continuing to believe that you will never change.

When I say "visibly" I mean that you take opportunities to let them know that you are doing something. If they call, say you only have a little time as you have to get to your counseling appointment. Say, "By the way, I've been reading a book on marriage. It's interesting." Remember to follow Rule #1, and not say much.

4. BE AVAILABLE MINIMALLY WHEN YOUR PARTNER ASKS FOR CONTACT

It is reasonable that your partner will try to contact you. They may ask for a chat. Ask, "How long?" Agree to give them half that time. They may ask for dinner together. Agree to give them a short one. They may ask for you to spend the night. Stay only through the evening. Get used to this. Think that you are trying to get a deer to come out of the forest and eat from your hand. You have to earn (or in this case, re-earn) its trust and never lose it.

Good luck.