

Flags & Bookmarks

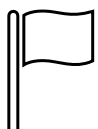
What is important to you?



Black Flags: Non-negotiables

The things you will not accept or tolerate. These can be related to past experiences in relationships, patterns you noticed in your parent's relationship, or general behaviours that you've picked up along the way. Knowing these flags ahead of time reduces the chances of you starting a relationship with someone that is not a good fit with you or continuing in a relationship that is no longer good for you.

i.e. DV, substance abuse, infidelity, controlling behaviour, going through your phone, etc.



White Flags: Must haves

Qualities or characteristics that are essential/required for you to have a long, healthy, and fulfilling relationship.

i.e. a job, a good relationship with their family, healthy communication, wants kids



Green Flags: Strengths

Things that you want to see more of, that you appreciate about your partner, and efforts that are made to address previously flagged behaviours.

These are important! Using the 5:1 ratio is helpful here – 5 supportive/positive interactions for every 1 critical/negative interaction.



Orange Flags: Watch out

It may be something, it may be nothing, but it caught your attention for a reason, which means that it is worth flagging for future reference. Periodically reflecting on the relationship can give you the chance to note clusters of related orange flags.

This can help you to identify recurring concerns and/or unwanted behaviour patterns without dwelling on every little thing as it comes up. Regular couple check-ins can provide a great opportunity to have a casual discussion about any of these flags that are causing concern.



Red Flags: Needs discussing

A red flag could be an accumulation of unresolved orange flags or the presence of a black flag at the outset of the relationship. These flags need to be addressed and if they don't stop, or if they become more frequent/intense, may become black flags.

i.e. persistent dismissal of, or engagement in, any behaviour/activity that has been expressly raised as a concern. Depending on the nature of the red flag it may require immediate conversation, or it may be raised during the weekly couple check in.



Bookmarks

Once you decide to start the process of forgiveness or commit to working for a healthier relationship you place the bookmark. This marks the decision to separate your present and future from the past. Just like placing a bookmark in a novel does not disqualify or erase the part of the story that came

before, it creates a pause between where you were and where you are going.

The experience before the bookmark can inform what comes next and can be reflected on for reference as the story proceeds. Without the bookmark, past experiences can overshadow the efforts that are made in the present. Please remember to take regular opportunities to look for the positive changes and efforts that are made. Notice the positives to encourage them to continue and help guide them towards ongoing growth and improvement. Not getting it right the first time doesn't mean they aren't trying; it means they are learning.

What are your flags?

This exercise can be used if you are single or in a relationship.

- ❖ If you are **single** you can fill out the BLACK/WHITE columns based on what you want in a relationship, and the GREEN/ORANGE/RED columns based on experiences you have had in past relationships.
- ❖ If you are **in a relationship** you can fill out the BLACK/WHITE columns based on what you want in a relationship and use it to reflect on your current relationship, and the GREEN/ORANGE/RED columns based on experiences you are having/have had in your existing relationship.

In either case consider this: Are you honouring your non-negotiables and must haves or are you overlooking them and settling? If it's the latter, ask yourself why and take notes below.

BLACK	WHITE	GREEN	ORANGE	RED
<i>Non-negotiables</i>	<i>Must haves</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Watch out</i>	<i>Needs discussing</i>

What did you learn?
