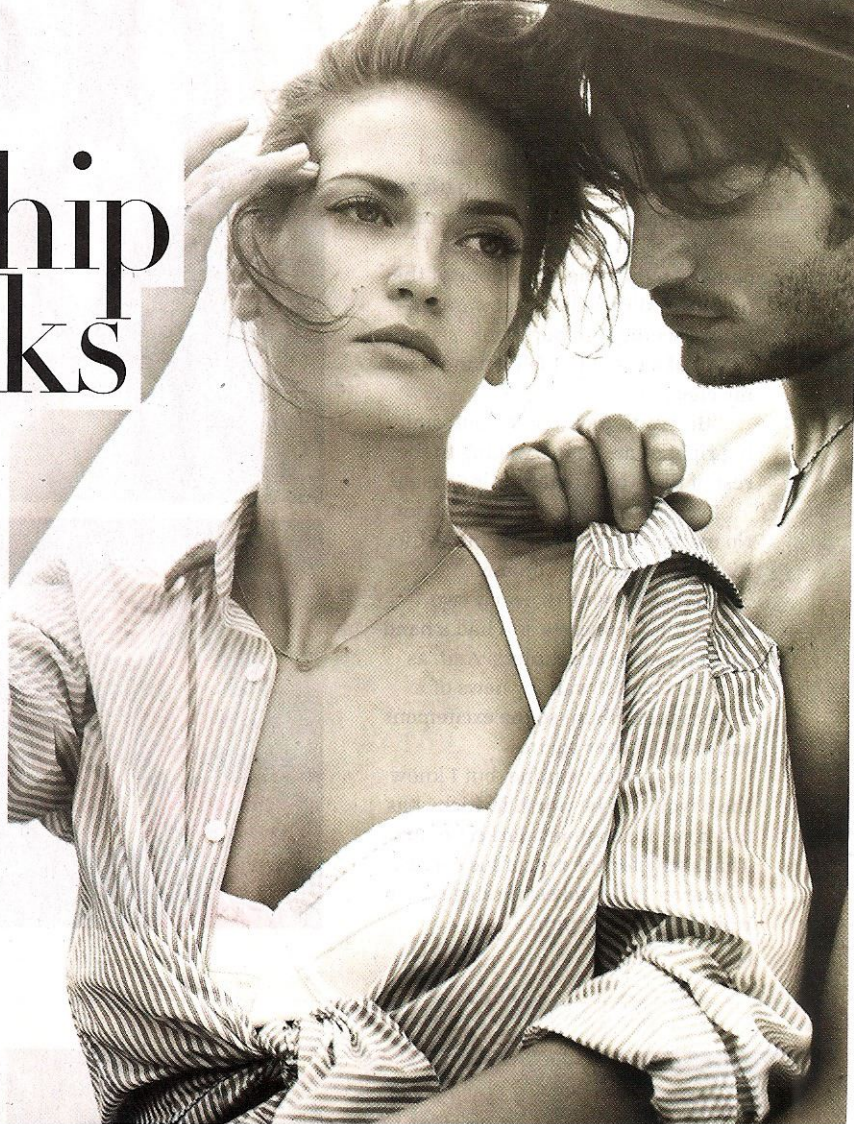


Relationship Roadblocks

SURVIVING THE SETBACKS ALL NEW COUPLES FACE CAN ACTUALLY BOOST YOUR BOND. HERE, THE MOST COMMON LOVE BUMPS—AND HOW TO GET OVER THEM.

By Celia Shatzman



Every relationship comes with fantastic firsts—the first date, the first kiss, the first shared secret. But no one talks about the first hurdles. Though they're tough to deal with, surviving them can make your love stronger. "When you confront issues as a couple, you learn about each other's needs and expectations, and moving forward successfully establishes a foundation," says dominicana Sujeiry Gonzalez, a relationship expert and author of *Love Trips: A Collection of Relationship Stumbles*. Gonzalez explains how to deal with the first time...

... you have a fight.

Watch your tone: Once respect is lost, it's hard to get it back. Instead of calling him names or hurling insults, "Be emotionally intelligent by asking yourself, 'How did I contribute to this?'" Gonzalez says. "Whether you started the argument or he did, you have to take responsibility for your part instead of just blaming him. It's easier to get to a truce when you acknowledge the role you played."

... he talks about his ex.

While a casual mention is normal, if he speaks about her often, even if it's angrily, that's cause for concern. "It means he's still emotionally involved," Gonzalez says. "Tell him his talking about his old girlfriend makes you uncomfortable and ask if there is something there." Then evaluate if you need to give him more time and space.

... he turns down sex.

"He might really be tired or have a headache," Gonzalez says. "Take it at face value and don't automatically assume it means he's not attracted to you anymore." But if he repeatedly avoids sex, that could be a problem. Maybe he feels the emotional connection is gone, or perhaps he is cheating on you. A physical issue could also be behind his low libido, especially if he's under a lot of stress. The only way to find out is to talk it through with your guy.

... you catch him in a lie.

Whether it was a little white lie or a whopper, it can be hard to regain trust. "To keep suspicion from festering, you must confront it," advises Gonzalez. The lie could be a sign of a larger issue, so get to the bottom of why he fibbed. If he continues to be untrustworthy, you may need to draw the line.

... he gets jealous.

Don't fuel the envy by reacting in a defensive or argumentative way. "Men need reassurance as much as women do," Gonzalez says. But if he gets jealous often, it could be a red flag—perhaps he has a controlling personality or is very insecure.

... he ditches you for his friends.

Avoid talking to your guy when you're angry or emotional, since that's when you're more likely to say things you'll regret or that will come off as needy. Wait until you've cooled off, then, "Communicate your point of view in a calm, composed way," Gonzalez says. "If you're logical and firm, he'll respect you for standing up for yourself." But whatever you do, don't continuously call or text him when he's out with his pals.