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The Problem With Being a 'Hopeless Romantic', According to Relationship Experts

Here are the signs you might be falling into this trap — plus, a different way of thinking about love that might be even more fulfilling.

By [Maressa Brown](#) | Published on January 20, 2022 @ 08:00AM



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If you binge-watch shows like *Love Is Blind*, consider rom-com your favorite genre, and can relate to Charlotte York the most of all the *Sex & the City* (or should we say *And Just Like That?*) characters, you might be a proud, self-described hopeless romantic.

It might even feel like an oxymoron to call yourself hopeless, because you feel — and come across as — overly hopeful and seemingly overly positive, points out Dana McNeil, PsyD, LMFT, founder of The Relationship Place in San Diego. "A hopeless romantic can often be

described as someone who is in love with being in love," says McNeil. "They believe that love conquers all."

But being a hopeless romantic isn't without its pitfalls. Here, McNeil and other relationship experts share the pros and cons of hopeless romanticism — and a different way of thinking about love that might be even more fulfilling.

How to Know If You're a Hopeless Romantic

The following signs may indicate that you're a hopeless romantic, for better or worse:

1. You profess to be an eternal optimist.

Being shamelessly sunny about love is absolutely one standout trait hopeless romantics possess. "A hopeless romantic professes to be an eternal optimist about the power of love," says McNeil. "They say there is nothing insurmountable as long as loyalty, fidelity, and compassion exist in a relationship."

2. You have strong destiny beliefs.

If you believe in soulmates and think that relationships are either meant to be — aka fated — or not (think fairytale romance or the "perfect" love story), you likely have strong destiny beliefs, which are linked to being a hopeless romantic, says Theresa DiDonato, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Loyola University in Maryland.

"Accordingly, people with stronger destiny beliefs may place a heavy weight on the impressions they make during first dates or first encounters," explains DiDonato. "They may infer the future potential of the relationship from the first moments of an initial encounter (for instance, there's chemistry, or not)."

And people with higher destiny beliefs might be inclined to avoid working through bumps in the road. "For a hopeless romantic, a hiccup could be (mis)interpreted as a sign that a relationship is not meant to be," says DiDonato.

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3. You continue to wear rose-colored glasses even in the face of truly chronic issues.

On the flip side, a hopeless romantic may stay in a dynamic that isn't working because they hold on to the hope that "maybe it will get better" in another week, month, year — and on and on, explains [Lauren Cook](#), PsyD, MMFT, a San Diego-based psychologist.

Hopeless romantics are often unwilling to notice or respond to signs that a partner may not be sharing their same level of affection, admiration, or commitment to making the relationship work, says McNeil. "They are often willing to turn a blind eye to the true issues happening in a relationship that may make partners unsuitable for a long-term relationship," she adds.

Cook agrees, noting that hopeless romantics often neglect to see the red flags or even just areas in which their partner has potential for growth.

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4. You're too easily willing to let hurtful words or actions go, and you've silenced your truth.

Hopeless romantics might also not feel emotionally safe enough in their relationship to speak their truth and ask for their needs, explains McNeil. They may spend a lot of time worrying that their partner won't stick it out in the relationship and find themselves carrying all of the burden to make the relationship "work."

If you believe that you must always hold this person in a positive light and doing so requires you to minimize your feelings and avoid addressing a partner's problematic behaviors, then you have to look at your motivations for doing so, notes McNeil.

5. You believe that being in a relationship will improve your life.

When you're idealizing what life would look like with a significant other versus thinking about the reality of being in a partnership, you could be a hopeless romantic. Hopeless romantics visualize how their lives will be better off when they have a partner, explains McNeil. "Ask yourself if you are just looking for someone to check a box or are you deciding to be with this person based on who they are and how you fit into each other's needs and value systems," she advises.

How Being a Hopeless Romantic Can Hurt You in Relationships

Although it's beneficial to hold a sense of openness and excitement to love — especially when it can be easy for others to be jaded or closed off to a relationship — hopeless romantics might avoid truly assessing whether or not a person is the right fit for them, explains Cook.

"If you find yourself having serious doubts about a relationship, but you keep progressing the relationship forward because you think it will get better 'eventually,' this is a clue to look out for," says Cook, who notes that she has seen many couples and individuals in therapy years later because they kept pushing their relationship along, even though they knew pretty early on that it wasn't the right fit.

Cook says hopeless romantics are often coping with anxious attachment, which goes hand-in-hand with a fear of abandonment. "With anxious attachment, we feel desperate to find a connection — sometimes, any connection — and will do just about anything to hold onto it, even if it is not serving us."

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On the other hand, if you have secure attachment, you trust that you are worthy and know there's someone out there who's a good fit. People with secure attachment are more like hopeful romantics. "A hopeful romantic is someone who is secure in themselves and wants a relationship that adds to their life versus saves them from being alone," notes [Stephanie Macadaan](#), LMFT, a therapist in the San Francisco Bay Area, California. "A hopeful romantic is open and accepting of others but able to set boundaries that create healthy dynamics."

Cook says hopeful romantics can see when a relationship is working and when it isn't. "They're not afraid to make decisions, like break-ups, because they know it will bring them closer to the person who is actually a better fit," she explains.

How to Go From Being Hopeless to Hopeful

Moving from one mindset to the other isn't exactly as easy as flipping a switch, because, as Cook points out, anxious attachment — and by extension, being a hopeless romantic — is a "deeply wired neural

pattern." That's not to say things are entirely out of our control, though. "When we start to choose different actions, like communicating clearly rather than keeping doubts or frustrations to ourselves, we begin to have corrective experiences where we can learn that we can operate differently in our dynamics," explains Cook.

And because our patterns may be unconscious, it could also be beneficial to work with a mental health care provider, says Cook. "When we're anxious, we tend to stay with the same people and go to the same 'favorite spot' because it's comfortable and familiar to us," she adds. "Get yourself out of your comfort zone by exploring new experiences. This will help you realize your resilience and that you're more adaptable than you may presently believe."

Ultimately, becoming a hopeful romantic requires cultivating self-love and committing to self-work. While there's no harm in continuing to consume a steady diet of rom-coms and *The Bachelor*, setting the stage for a lasting, fulfilling partnership in your own, very real life is an inside job. As McNeil points out, "The real task for gaining confidence about our ability to find real love and experience greater personal satisfaction is to hold ourselves in esteem as someone who knows their own worth and value."

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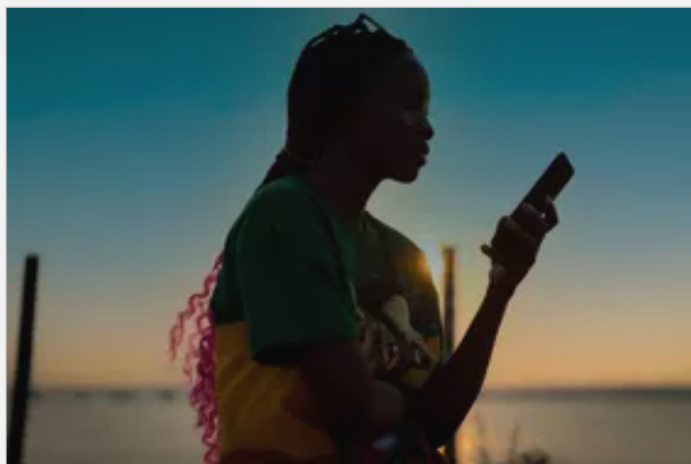
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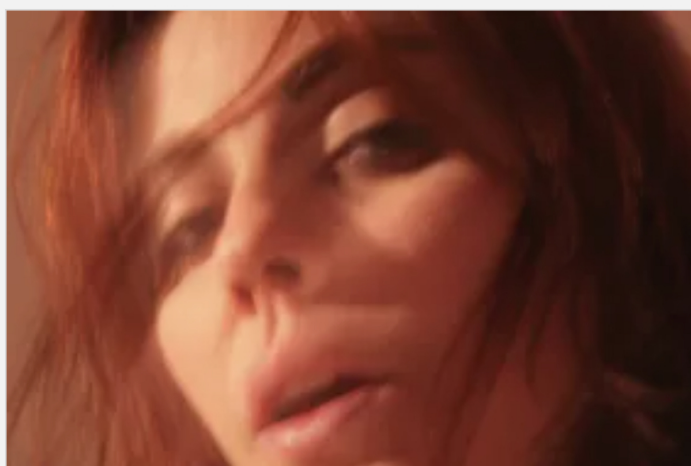
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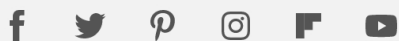
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