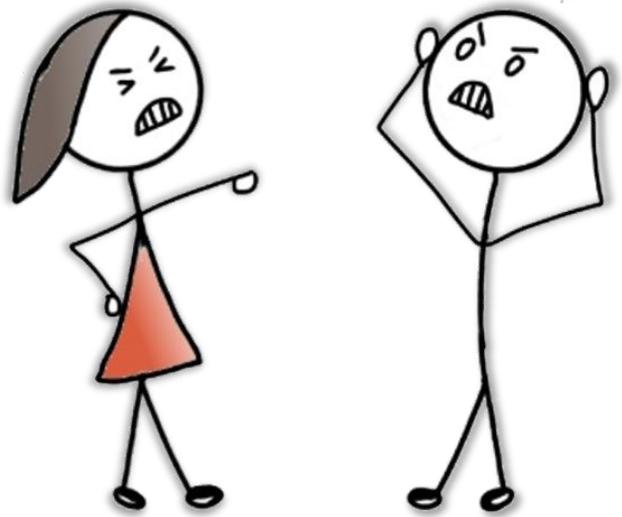


RECOGNIZING RED FLAGS OF CONTROLLING TENDENCIES

based on a talk presented by David Kohn, LCSW, CASAC



Controlling behavior is when one person expects, compels, or requires others to cater to their own needs — even at others' expense.

During the dating period, you are getting to know the other person. And you are helping them get to know you. You are finding out about each other's values and interests, and experiencing each other's personalities and quirks.

And you should also be working to ascertain that you both can work together in a loving and successful marriage. You should be paying deep attention to your gut about how you feel in the relationship. And how the other feels as well.

Beyond the other's values, priorities, overall personality and how a spouse fits into their goals and dreams, there are several other things to consider throughout your dating, especially as the relationship develops.

NEVER infer anything; make sure you really know. NEVER think that you'll figure these things out eventually. And most importantly, listen to your own gut.

RESPECT & ADMIRATION

Do you admire and respect him/her?
What about him/her do you admire and respect?

Do you feel admired and respected by him/her? What about you does s/he admire and respect? (How do you know that: From your own observations? From your experience with him/her? From what s/he says?)

COMFORTABILITY

Do you feel totally comfortable with him/her?

Does s/he feel totally comfortable with you? (How do you know that: From your own observations? From your experience with him/her? From what s/he says? From the 'shadchen'?)

INTERACTIONS WITH EACH OTHER

How does s/he interact with others? (How do you know that: From your own observations? From your experience with him/her? From your 'research'? From what s/he says?)

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Tune into how you are experiencing the other person. How do you feel in the following areas?

Generally, people are on their best behavior during dating. So it is especially important to **really tune in and pay attention** to the following questions during the dating. These are RED FLAGS of controlling tendencies.

Caveat: **Nothing is black & white. If you notice isolated incidents, it does not mean control or abuse. However,** if you notice a pattern, or if you feel a sense of pressure or guilt to do as s/he wants, then you might be dealing with control issues. **Trust your gut. And speak to a qualified professional.**

You ought to also think about these topics in regard to yourself:

When have I gone through similar situations in my life? What happens on my end?

- How have I handled myself?
- What am I challenged with in those situations?
- Do I become impatient, frustrated?
- Do I feel that the other doesn't care or respect me?
- Do I become disrespectful?
- Do I become short-tempered?

DECISIONS

How are decisions made? What is the process?

- How does the person I am dating make decisions?
- How do I make decisions?
- How do we make decisions together?

During shiduch dating, you may not have many opportunities to observe each other making decisions or coming to a decision together. Where you might experience during dating: Deciding where to go on the date, what to eat, where and when to make the Lchaim.

CONFLICTS

What happens when there is a conflict or difference of opinion or disagreement?

What are the responses and reactions to conflict? How does it get resolved?
How does the person I am dating respond to conflict?
How do I?

DISAGREEMENT

How comfortable are you to disagree?

When we disagree, what is going on for the other person? What is going on for me?
How comfortable does the other person feel to disagree with me? If s/he is not comfortable, why not?
Am I comfortable to disagree with him/ her? If you are not comfortable, why not?

CHANGING OTHER'S MIND

What might s/he do to change my mind?
What might I do to change her/his mind?

If these topics don't play out in actuality, then at the very least, explore them in conversation.

You might bring them up in a discussion, definitely not as a interrogation or checklist: "What are your thoughts about how conflicts should be handled?", "What are your thoughts about how to negotiate a relationship when you are very passionate about the way it should go?"

ATTITUDES to look out for & be mindful of

Tune into how you are experiencing the other person. How do you feel in the following areas?

<p>JEALOUS OF TIME SPENT WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS</p>	<p>Does s/he get jealous of time you spend with others? Are you jealous of her/his time spent with others? You are not expected to drop everything that is important to you because you are in a relationship. And you can't expect that from her/him either.</p>
<p>PLANNING TO MAKE THE OTHER CHANGE</p>	<p>Do you try to dissuade her/him from plans with friends? Are you starting to think about how you might dissuade her/him from having certain friendships, or going certain places or doing certain things? Do you feel that s/he is starting to think about how s/he might change your plans, your way of being? Of course, you will not always like what the other person is doing. However, those in a healthy relationship have a mutually respectful dialog about it, with both of you talking respectfully about your thoughts. It is the way you disagree that matters.</p>
<p>DISAPPROVAL & DISAPPOINTMENT</p>	<p>Is s/he starting to express unhappiness, disapproval with things you do? Are you starting to feel or express disapproval with things that s/he does?</p>
<p>PRESSURING & GUILTING</p>	<p>Is s/he pressuring or guiltting you into responding in a certain way – just to keep her/him happy? Are you pressuring or guiltting her/him?</p>
<p>KEEPING TABS</p>	<p>Do you need to know her/his whereabouts at all times and are angry if s/he is not available? Do you feel you 'must' tell her/him where you were? Do you share your day – because you want to? Or do you feel that you must give an accounting of the day? Are you expecting a complete accounting of her/his day? Is s/he sharing her day because s/he wants to, or because s/he somehow feels obligated to? This is different from a healthy accountability to the relationship and each other.</p>
<p>UNHEEDED ADVICE</p>	<p>Giving advice and what if it is not heeded How do you react when you give advice that is not heeded? Is there anger? Is there a 'stuckness', or flexibility? Do you say: "Why didn't you listen to me?" How does s/he react?</p>
<p>OWNING ONE'S ACTIONS</p>	<p>Does s/he take responsibility for her/his actions? Does s/he apologize? Does s/he justify her/his actions? Or 'dig in her/his heels' – "I had to do that because ..."? Does s/he brush it off in some way? Do you own your own actions? How easily do you apologize?</p>

It is worth repeating. If you notice one of these things, or if s/he or you express your concern about something (ex: how much time is spent on something), it does not mean controlling or abuse. It all depends on the way it is brought up, and the dynamics of the couple, if there is a dialogue about it, if there is reciprocity in the conversation, are both hearing and being heard, etc.

However, if there is a sense of guilt or pressure. Or a pattern of this behavior is emerging – then you might be dealing with control issues.

If you are noticing these things during the dating, note that it will not get better later in the marriage.

Speak to a **qualified professional about your apprehensions.**