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**Title: Snap back or end it**

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You're in the relationship, but you're not sure your partner still is. With empty date-night promises and a sex life as sincere as TomKat's engagement, you're wondering if the relationship is over. You've been reduced to begging for attention and explanations.

Not attractive.

First, cut the whining. You keep asking "Why aren't you spending more time with me?" but that only makes you look needy. Stop smothering and loosen up the chokehold; it's making watching TV together nearly impossible.

Desperate ploys for attention will only make you look--you guessed it--desperate. Healthy relationships are about balancing the give and the take, the yin and the yang. If you're yinping all up in your partner's face, you're leaving no room for the yang.

Think of your situation like a rubber band. Pull back, and your partner will move forward. It's the natural ebb and flow that will determine if the relationship is going to bounce back or break.

Don't chase. Your partner may just be creating a rift because the relationship is getting too intimate, so don't take it personally. It's the commitment-phobe's typical response: Instead of getting out entirely, they slowly distance themselves.

OK, fine. Let it happen. See if the rubber band breaks.

But here's a warning: Giving that much space can be scary. Take one desperate houseguy, for example. He told me that when his girlfriend craves freedom, he tries to lock her down. The guy either demands she stay home with him or insists on half-hour check-ins when he does let her out on her retractable leash.

He's worried that if she gets the space she needs, she'll find someone better. But that's not love. That's entrapment.

If she had a higher self-esteem, she probably would leave him.

In an equal relationship, you shouldn't have to ask permission or beg for attention. If you fall into this tripped-out pattern and you're constantly made to feel undesirable, get out before your self-esteem is affected. Take back control.

Your partner is not your lifeline. Take care of yourself, both physically and mentally. Start by digging that naughty movie out of the "Casablanca" DVD sleeve. It's all about being self-sufficient. The more you create your own pleasure, the more empowered you'll

feel.

You've got options. Get back into your hobbies, have dinner with friends. Flirt when you're out and help yourself feel attractive again.

When you and your partner do go out separately, avoid the constant "WHERE R U?" text bombs. Leave the gadgets at home if you can't avoid the double-thumbed nags. Obsessive texting does nothing but make you look obsessive. Besides, if your partner isn't with you, do you really want his/her pants constantly vibrating?

It's not about playing hard to get, it's about playing hard to keep. Here's the strategy: If your partner wants you, it's time for him or her to put in the work to keep you. Otherwise, you can find someone who will.

Take a lesson from my favorite StreetWise vendor, who always offers a great greeting and warm smile. Few people can resist giving him money and yet rarely does anyone actually take the StreetWise. Why? Because it's his personality they're buying into, not the paper.

Same end result, different product. When your partner isn't buying what you're selling, heed the advice.

Your honey should be staying in the relationship because of you, not the snacks at your pity party.

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