

BREAKING UP WITH SOMEBODY



SOURCE: Helene C. Parker, Ph.D., psychotherapist, author of *If This Is Love, Why Am I So Lonely?*

SUGGESTED HIDING PLACE:
Under napkin

SIGNIFICANT DATE:
One month (been dating less than that, may break up over phone; longer, must do in person)

THE GROUNDWORK
Ask her to meet you at a neutral location—restaurant, bar, coffee shop. (Parker: “At her

place she’s more likely to become emotional; at yours you may never convince her to leave.”) Say, “We need to talk about some things.”

- ▶ If you’re having dinner, make innocuous small talk until the final course is served.
- ▶ Segue into subject by saying, “There’s something important I need to talk to you about.”

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THE BREAKUP (operative strategy: positive communication)

Avoid:

- ▶ personal attacks (e.g., “You’re too controlling.”)
- ▶ double messages (e.g., “You’re a nice person, but...”)
- ▶ saying too much (Parker: “If you go on too long, you’ll just dig yourself into a hole. Keep it short and direct.”)

Focus on:

- ▶ Talking in “I’s,” not “you’s,” and taking responsibility for what you’re doing—don’t blame the other person.
- ▶ Lack of compatibility. Say, “I’m sorry, but I need to break things off. I don’t think we’re compatible.”

THE REACTION

If she says...

“But I thought we were perfect for each other.”

“I can change.”

“You’re a total creep; I hate you.” (Followed by hysterical crying, screaming, wielding of butter knife, etc.)

You say...

“Thank you for the compliment, but I don’t feel that way.”

“I’m sure you can, but I don’t think you need to change. We’re just incompatible.”

“I’m sorry.... Can I get you some water?”

THE GETAWAY

- ▶ Stand and say, “I’m sorry things had to end this way, but there’s no sense living a lie. Goodbye.”
- ▶ Don’t look back; don’t feel guilty; don’t call her the next day. (Parker: “She’s an adult, she can take care of herself. Your responsibility is to give the bad news and give your explanation. That’s all.”)