

When It's Not an Ultimatum

May 21, 2019 | 122 upvotes | by [Kara El](#)

I'm going to share two stories of two very different women, who *did not* give ultimatums.

I met Jenny when we were 14. Even at this age, as a young feminist and future career woman, she didn't want children. Everyone told her she'd change her mind. At 16, she didn't want children. At 20, she didn't want children. At 22, she fell in love with a man 10 years her senior, Dave, and told him clearly that she didn't want children. At some point, however, Dave decided that he *did* want children and that Jenny would eventually change her mind. Jenny entered academia, where she grew into an even more liberal feminist and unsurprisingly, *did not want children*, a life choice that was very much supported by her environment. Ultimately, she told Dave that under no circumstances was she ever willing to have children. He walked and she let him. She never changed her mind and, last I heard, had met a man with similar goals and was pursuing her PhD.

I met Sally when I was working at a movie theater in college. She was pretty, slender, smart, and was dating another employee, Cody. Cody was good looking, confident, funny, social, ambitious, and often a complete asshole. They both came from good families and had been dating for nearly a year, at 19. I don't recall if they intentionally followed each other to college or met there, but just from the oversharing young people do, I knew that Cody had been Sally's second partner and she had been his first. Love was in the air and they both assumed that, after college, they would eventually get married.

Although Sally wanted a career, even then, she *knew* she wanted to be a doting wife and mother. At 19, Cody seemed game for the former, but less interested in the latter. Finally, he told Sally that he didn't want kids... and she immediately ended it with him. She told him she loved him, but that she was not willing to spend her youth on a man who wouldn't *eventually* want children. She *had* to know that if they married, children would be in their future. She didn't throw a fit or demand promises. She walked... and he didn't let her. A few months passed and Cody thought it over, consulted friends and family, and decided that he would *eventually* want children. He genuinely loved Sally... and she did not immediately take him back. Unsurprisingly, she felt that he'd only given in to an ultimatum she didn't intend to give. I don't know what Cody did or said to make her feel differently, but in time, they did get back together. Last I heard, they're happily married and on baby number two.

A tale of two *women*, the men's decisions are irrelevant. These women, however different, both vetted carefully, at a young age, for a man with common goals. Upon discovering that their choices weren't consistent with where they wanted to go in life, they set aside their feelings and walked. Ultimatums are *always* a terrible idea and neither of these women gave one. They calmly and rationally stated their deal breakers and took a future they didn't want off the table, accepting the consequences. One found herself single and the other found her man had a change of heart. The difference here is that Jenny had *endless* years to find a man who didn't want children, especially in her environment, while Sally had only a handful, making it all the more important for Sally to vet with her endgame in mind.

For all the women here who find themselves considering giving an ultimatum or even waiting him out, I'd advise you to rethink. Consider what you want from life and vet accordingly. If he tells you he sees a different future than you do, walk... not so he'll run after you, but to free yourself up for someone with a similar vision. There are many, many wonderful men out there and the earlier you begin vetting well, the better chance you'll have of landing one.

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Comments

countrylemon • 36 points • 21 May, 2019 06:02 PM

Giving an ultimatum, in my opinion, means you've given up on steering your own life.

Kara__El[S] • 27 points • 21 May, 2019 07:29 PM

I feel like it also indicates that you've stayed too long, in the first place, after discovering an incompatibility. Whether you want marriage, children, to travel the world... these things should come up very early in a relationship. I think people ignore these concretes for abstracts like chemistry and attraction, thinking it will all work out, which inevitably translates to thinking they can change their partner. Then they can't and five years are wasted, so an ultimatum seems like a worthy gamble.

[deleted] • 15 points • 21 May, 2019 09:10 PM

I feel like it also indicates that you've stayed too long.

This is such a beautiful statement. I think it belongs in your original post. I absolutely agree, it's that sunk cost fallacy.

However, chemistry and attraction are extremely important and shouldn't be discarded so easily. There's plenty of people who want kids on the exact same timeline who would be absolutely horrible for each other.

You can't negotiate chemistry or attraction, I'd argue that just as you said, you cannot negotiate the tangibles like marriage and children either.

I guess the trick is to not be so blinded by the attraction and chemistry that you ignore the incompatibilities.

Kara__El[S] • 4 points • 21 May, 2019 10:22 PM

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That was actually what I was trying to say, not so much that they aren't important. I do think some people have far too narrow a definition of both, however. On a first date, chemistry is almost entirely conversational, attraction almost entirely an issue of potential, especially if you meet online. They're important, but you also have to be open to letting them develop.

The guy who wants the same things you want, will eventually be much more attractive to you than the hot guy who doesn't know if he ever wants to get married.

party_dragon • 2 points • 23 May, 2019 10:54 PM

Meh, you're a bit too black-and-white.

I've given ultimatums before. The alternative was to just walk away (as in the post above), but I otherwise enjoyed the relationship, we've both invested a lot into it (but but sunk cost fallacy!), and I believed that she could change... and she did!

Ultimatums are awesome, if you're giving them for the right reasons and with the right mindset.

ny-lady • 7 points • 21 May, 2019 10:39 PM

I knew at a young age I didnt want children so Ive always only dated men with the same plan/or they already had kids and didn't want more. Im ok if a man has kids I just didnt want any of my own.

Adoption when I was older was on the table though and still is for me.

You need to date those with the same goals and values as you have. Dont waste time on those that dont align even if you care greatly for them.

Elevyn11 • 2 points • 22 May, 2019 06:58 AM

Interesting . ☐

LateralThinker13 • 2 points • 22 May, 2019 01:14 PM

Well said.

loneliness-inc • 2 points • 23 May, 2019 01:18 AM

You can't control or change others, you can only control and change yourself.

An ultimatum is an attempt to get someone to conform to your will or to change for you. They may give in temporarily, but good things never come from this.

What you can do is to remove yourself from situations you don't like. This is what both your friends did and that's why it worked in both cases. These women stated what kind of marriage they will stay in and the men chose to accept or reject the offer. No one was manipulative towards anyone and that's the beauty of it.

moonchildcountrygirl • 1 point • 23 May, 2019 05:01 AM

This is how I came to exist. My mom was 8 years younger than my dad but *very* focused on her future. She was about to enter grad school for her librarian's masters and didn't have time or energy to be dating wishy washy guys. She laid it out flat that if the relationship wasn't on the track for marriage she needed to move on and it was a huge wake up call for my dad. Not an ultimatum, just her vetting and prepared to lose the love of her life if her needs weren't met. He wanted it too, he needed a woman like her to give him the push

aussiedollface2 • 1 point • 25 May, 2019 12:54 AM

Vetting is so important! I think some women get caught up in the "chemistry" and feel that they can change their mans mind. Cue five years later and they are in the exact same situation except older and more jaded and bitter
xo