

30 Signs You're Dating a Sociopath (W/ Examples)

The Power Moves | 5 September, 2018 | by Lucio Buffalmano

Are you worried you might be dating a sociopath?

It's a good idea to double check: [they are terrible partners](#).

Spotting early sociopath signs can make the difference between a happy life and a personal tragedy.

By the end of this post you will know how to spot -and hopefully avoid- dangerous sociopaths.

Contents

- [Sociopath Signs](#)
 - [1. Gaslighting](#)
 - [2. You're Explaining Simple Feelings That Shouldn't Need Explaining](#)
 - [3. He Demands a Lot While Giving Little \(Hypocrisy\)](#)
 - [4. There Are Constant Lies and Excuses](#)
 - [5. They Always Draw Attention to Your Mistakes](#)
 - [6. You Wonder if They're Normal](#)
 - [7. He is Selfish and Attention-Seeking](#)
 - [8. You Are Playing Detective](#)
 - [9. They Have a Small Band of Admirers](#)
 - [10. You're Afraid For Fights to End the Relationship](#)
 - [11. They Started Having a Contemptuous Attitude](#)
 - [12. They Withhold Attention](#)
 - [13. They Expect You to Read Their Mind](#)
 - [14. You Know Something is Wrong, But You Want Them to Like You](#)
 - [15. There Are Lots of Crazy or Abusive People in Their Past](#)
 - [16. They Make You Jealous Through Other People \(AKA: Triangulation\)](#)
 - [17. They Pursued You With Abandon \(AKA: Love Bombing\)](#)
 - [18. They Compare You to Others](#)
 - [19. Some Behavior Doesn't Add Up \(AKA: Cracks in Their Mask\)](#)
 - [20. They Are Easily Bored, And Need Stimulation](#)
 - [21. They Try to Make You Feel Guilty](#)
 - [22. There Is Lots of Drama in Your Relationship](#)
 - [23. You're Experiencing Emotional Roller Coaster](#)
 - [24. He Is Becoming Your Entire Life](#)
 - [25. You're Enjoying Great Sex](#)
 - [26. They Are Arrogant](#)
 - [27. They Gossip, Demean, and Backstab Others](#)
 - [28. There Are Lots of Games and Manipulation](#)
 - [29. When You Corner Them, They Talk Nonsense \(AKA: Word Salad\)](#)
 - [30. Your Feelings Are Telling You Something Isn't Right](#)
 - [More Psychopath Signs](#)
 - [One Question to Spot Sociopaths](#)
 - [Limitations of This Article](#)

Sociopath Signs

The best line of defense against a sociopath is realizing early, before you get involved.

And then *avoiding* to get involved at all.

Look out for these signs:

1. Gaslighting

Gaslighting is the “technique” with which psychopaths make their partners look and feel crazy.

Gaslighting can start small.

They might say something, then deny they ever said it.

And you will wonder if you imagined it.

Or they will manipulate you to make you jealous, angry or on edge.

When you naturally get emotional or overreact, you are too sensitive, bipolar or “crazy”.

You will look at your own emotional behavior and tell yourself “maybe I am too emotional indeed”.

You will start taking more and more of the blame for any problem, as you get sicker and sicker and the sociopath controls you more and more.

That’s the essence of gaslighting.

Gaslighting Video Example

Here is an example from the movie “The Goodfellas”:

Gaslighting Power Play

[Adelyn Birch](#) provides a wonderful analysis of this dynamic, which I will summarize here.

First, the sociopath will make you emotional.

Then, they will accuse you of being emotional and put you on the defensive.

As you get more emotional they will stay calm and collected while you will look more and more, indeed, a bit too flighty.

Looking at the difference between you and him you will think you are going too far. At that point you will begin to calm down, retreat and possibly apologize.

When you apologize they will possibly play offended and hurt. They might drag it over for a while just to hurt you even more.

And finally they will “pardon you”.

When they forgive you, they effectively take the power position.

They first stirred you into going wild, then made you feel irresponsible, and then they took the parent role who grants absolution.

You feel terrible, vanquished, and maybe even a little bit grateful for pardoning you. And for accepting you for the crazy one you are (again, gaslighting).

Here are the steps:

1. Make you emotional
2. Accuse of drama
3. Forgive you (power position for them)

2. You're Explaining Simple Feelings That Shouldn't Need Explaining

If you find yourself trying to explain how you feel, the options are two:

1. You might indeed be highly sensitive ([Borderline Personalities](#) are)
2. He cannot understand your feelings

As a good rule of thumb, it's always good to look at ourselves before pointing fingers.

But if you are explaining very basic and normal reactions, then you have a big red flag here.

Sociopaths do not feel the same way you do. They don't even have the feelings you're trying to explain.

If they stare at you with a blank expression, you might be staring at a soulless individual.

Similarly, if you find yourself explaining the basics of social interactions and the basics of common respect, something is wrong.

3. He Demands a Lot While Giving Little (Hypocrisy)

They ask a lot of you, but provide none of what they demand of you.

That includes [demands for faithfulness](#) while they themselves [often cheat](#).

Example

Harvey Keitel plays the part of a sociopathic pimp in the movie "The Pick Up Artist".

He demands fidelity while being extremely jealous and violent:

4. There Are Constant Lies and Excuses

Sociopaths lie continuously, often even for small stuff there would be no point to lie about.

That's what befuddles many partners of sociopaths. "What's the point of lying about that", they wonder.

Well, many sociopaths are pathological liars.

Of course, being sociopaths if they get caught they have no remorse.

They might get angry though, or give you the silent treatment to "punish you" for having uncovered their lie.

5. They Always Draw Attention to Your Mistakes

Once you are out of the initial idealization phase, any small mistake of yours won't go unnoticed.

But they don't like being criticized when *they* make something wrong.

Sociopaths, [manipulators](#), and [toxic people](#) don't like taking the blame.

They are quick to turn the conversation back to you, especially to remind you of whatever small mistake you had done.

| [Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics](#)

6. You Wonder if They're Normal

Sometimes you will wonder if they're normal.

Or human.

They dread being found out for not having human feelings and conscience.

Which is probably one of the reasons why they make it a point to make you believe that *you* are not normal.

Sociopath Relationship Example

The character in "American Psycho" has no feeling breaking up with his girlfriend, and for a normal, empathic person, he looks "strange":

7. He is Selfish and Attention-Seeking

The world revolves around them.

They demand constant attention and adoration.

That's why they often have a small crowd of cheering fans.

You won't notice in the beginning though: they only crave attention from you.

But as the relationship moves forward they will be less and less reliant from you and more and more looking outside the relationship for validation.

This is also part of their devaluation process, and if you are hooked, it might be very painful for you.

8. You Are Playing Detective

If you have never been the jealous type before and now you are researching and stalking them, that's another sociopath sign.

The reason why you are playing detective is because they are giving you a reason to be suspicious and distrusting.

Sociopaths do it on purpose sometimes: they want you on edge.

They want you to suspect their involvement.

It proves to them they are controlling you. And they enjoy that.

9. They Have a Small Band of Admirers

Sociopaths often have a few people around who like them and applaud them.

The sociopath might be using them for favors, money, for attention or... To make you jealous and increase their appeal.

Sometimes you are the only one who can better recognize them because you are the only one really close to them.

And if they are exes, chances are they are very undiscerning or [very low quality people](#).

10. You're Afraid For Fights to End the Relationship

If you are afraid that any fight might spell doom for your relationship, chances are you are already hooked.

And they're taking advantage of it, keeping you on your toes and controlling you through your fear.

Sociopaths surreptitiously -or openly- [threaten to end the relationship](#).

When they don't threaten to do so directly, their *behavior* does the talking. Their behavior communicates that they don't care much anymore about you and the relationship.

This is part of their "dread game", and they are playing cat and mouse.

Dump them yourself: it will hurt less.

Also read:

- [Psychopaths' control techniques](#)

Sociopath Emotional Distance Example

The American Beauty bedroom argument scene looks like a sociopath trying to own another bigger sociopath (or a normal man, him, finally standing up to a narcissistic woman)

11. They Started Having a Contemptuous Attitude

This is part of [taking the judge role](#) in the relationship.

In this case, a negative judge.

What does it mean, in simple words?

They criticize you with an air of superiority.

They have a smirk on their face, or a look of mild disgust, as if you were challenged.

Teasing can become a mainstay of your relationship, but it's often not a funny teasing. It's biting and hurtful.

At this point, you can start to feel resentful and the relationship has started becoming a [truly toxic relationship](#).

12. They Withhold Attention

Another sign of sociopaths is that of using attention as a test and control tool.

When you do something wrong, when they want to punish you or simply when they want to feel powerful and hurt you, they will go radio silent.

The first time they do it and you chase them worried and scared, they know they have you.

And they will relish it.

13. They Expect You to Read Their Mind

Some sociopaths might not communicate basic information, but they still expect you to know what they haven't even said.

This is part of their overblown sense of importance and of their entitled mentality.

14. You Know Something is Wrong, But You Want Them to Like You

If you said yes this is a big sign that you are in a toxic relationship.

If you realize there is something wrong with your relationship, you have finally caught up to some of their games -and to the reality of things-.

But if you still want them to like you, they have their fangs in you and are deeply controlling you.

Toxic Relationship Example

Karen is with an inveterate cheater, chronic liar and possibly sociopath. But no matter how much he hurts and gaslights her, she can't bear to leave him:

15. There Are Lots of Crazy or Abusive People in Their Past

Another big sociopath sign is when they tell stories of crazy people in their past.

Violent parents, bipolar exes, crazy exes who still want him, [abusive bosses](#)... Is it possible that the whole world is stacked against them?

Or maybe *they* are the crazy ones?

Also, make no mistake, you might be the next crazy one they'll talk about.

16. They Make You Jealous Through Other People (AKA: Triangulation)

While in the beginning all their attention was on you and they had eyes for nobody else, in the middle of the relationship they will do their best to make you jealous.

It might start with their exes popping up, FB flirting with mysterious girls, remarks of other women etc.

They are trying to plant the seed of doubt in your mind, making you more and more insecure.

If you want to play the game, read this article on [how to make him value more](#) to respond in kind.

However, just be aware that the only solution is to move forward and leave them behind.

Manipulative Behavior Example

Regina George in Mean Girls is the poster-child of a manipulative sociopath.

Of course, you might not have such obvious, glaring example -but it happens too!-, but the concept is the same

Read more on manipulation and [dark psychology](#):

| [Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People](#)

17. They Pursued You With Abandon (AKA: Love Bombing)

First off:

[some types of womanizers](#) also pursue with abandon, and they're not necessarily psychopaths.

But love bombing, as it's often called, *can* be a big red flag that you are dealing with a sociopath.

Love bombing is their twisted plan to make you fall in love.

For example:

1. Mirror your dreams, hopes and fears
2. Writes you first and all the time
3. Move every fast
4. Compliment you all the time
5. Say they've never felt like this before
6. Imply or state that you TWO are soulmates

They are fully fascinated by you.

And you love it.

... Until you don't anymore.

Watch out.

18. They Compare You to Others

In the beginning, they will be comparing you favorably.

You are the best thing that has ever happened to them.

Maybe you are giving them new hope in life, or maybe they are so happy that you are making them forget their terrible exes.

Also, watch out specifically for physical and body shape compliments: sociopaths are often very superficial.

But in the devaluation phase, the comparisons start to become negative.

Sometimes what were your best qualities become your major faults. Their exes weren't so bad after all and maybe... You just don't compare all too well with them.

Now if you are hooked an interesting thing will happen: their criticism will push you to prove yourself to them. You are putting up a desperate effort to win their love back.

Don't even try or hope though. The truth is that they never loved you. It's not about you: sociopaths cannot love.

19. Some Behavior Doesn't Add Up (AKA: Cracks in Their Mask)

High functioning sociopaths and psychopaths wear a mask.

They *pretend* to have feelings, they *pretend* to understand your feelings and they *pretend* to be nice and kind.

But they are putting forth a persona.

They *don't* have feelings, they have *no* empathy for you -and for anyone else for that matter- and they are *not* kind.

However, even the best actor sometimes will slip.

Their mask will come off, and then you will be able to peer behind it.

When something does not add up, take notice: it might be the sign of a sociopath.

20. They Are Easily Bored, And Need Stimulation

Sociopaths are easily bored.

That's one of the reasons why they surround themselves with people and why they engage in [machiavellian](#) games: they need constant new stimulation.

21. They Try to Make You Feel Guilty

Some ilk of sociopaths will leverage your sense of guilt or your willingness to help others.

If that's the case, their bad behavior is always justified by their hurt and their pain.

Who's the culprit? Abusive parents, an ex who really hurt him, or sometimes you who is being so mean to them.

Also see here:

- [Text example and analysis of guilty tripping](#) (or pity play).

22. There Is Lots of Drama in Your Relationship

Sociopaths might *say* they hate drama.

And yet there is always so much drama in their life. And now, there is a lot of drama in your life too.

Drama is one way with which sociopaths fight boredom.

If you've never had much drama in your life, but now you always do, then it should be easy to pinpoint the culprit.

23. You're Experiencing Emotional Roller Coaster

There are often wild emotional up and downs in a relationship with a sociopath.

When they have been too mean, they will get closer again so that you keep staying under their thumb.

Or maybe they treat you differently in public and in person. They might be mean and disrespectful in front of a stranger and then reel you back in behind closed doors.

Or be nice in public only to [treat you with contempt](#) in private.

Sociopath Roller Coaster Example

Marcello Mastroianni in *La Dolce Vita* is an example of an [avoidant with an anxious partner](#).

Notice her emotional swings.

She is in the dumps *because* of him. But when he shows up again, she feels like he is her savior.

The only one who can make her feel great.

[Warning: Be especially careful with emotional roller coasters, because they are emotionally addictive](#)

24. He Is Becoming Your Entire Life

Do you find yourself spending all your time with him and thinking all the time of him?

This could be the greatest love story ever.

Or the biggest heartbreak ever.

Tread with caution.

25. You're Enjoying Great Sex

Some sociopaths and [abusive men](#) use sex as a tool to make their targets swoon for them.

They make it a point to do it well, to make you come and to make your fantasies come true.

Sometimes, sociopaths and psychopaths will push the boundaries of sex and push you to do sexual acts that are new to you.

[Sandra Brown](#) says that a few psychopaths will also dominate or demean you during sex to increase their power and control.

26. They Are Arrogant

Sociopaths might humble and unassuming.

But that's part of the persona they put forward to make them more likable and approachable.

As the relationship wears on they become more and more themselves: arrogant and mean.

27. They Gossip, Demean, and Backstab Others

Sociopaths often have dislike "normal people".

And strong jealousy for people more successful than they are.

They will gossip and talk behind people's backs. In the beginning, you might feel special for hearing their confessions.

You might even start disliking or resenting some of the people they talk about.

And that's part of their game: recruiting more people on their side.

But their side is always switching. And it's very possible they will be doing the same about you.

28. There Are Lots of Games and Manipulation

At the heart of a sociopath relationship are [games and manipulations](#).

Here are some of them:

- Put you on the defensive (and when you explain yourself you sound guilty)
- Make you feel guilty
- Use you to make another woman jealous
- Use another woman to make you jealous

Sociopath Mindset Example

The movie “Gone Girl” is a good example.

If you’ve seen it, you know what I mean.

And if you think it’s just a movie, here is a real-life example:

Sociopaths are amoral, and see you as a pawn.

That lady in the video saw her husband as a green card, and a money provider.

When she thought she had no more use for him, she fabricated a story to get rid of him, and take all of his belongings.

29. When You Corner Them, They Talk Nonsense (AKA: Word Salad)

Sometimes you might manage to back a sociopath into a corner.

For example, you might have final proof of their wrongdoings.

Or you read this article and tell them exactly what they are up to.

In that case, they might come up with what [psychopath survivors](#) refer to as “word salad”.

Word salads are illogical conversations that go nowhere and only serve to confuse you, muddle the water, and possibly put you on the defensive.

They include:

1. Going back to previous topics that were already discussed and resolved
2. Bringing up old wrongdoings of yours
3. Condescending tone to make you overreact
4. Accuse you of their own wrongdoing to make you overreact
5. Switch personality and techniques to confuse you
6. Play the victim

Finally, if you keep your cool and keep pushing and pushing, you will see a face of the sociopath you have never seen before.

They lose their cool and will watch them implode as they struggle to regain control.

That’s great news for you: you are breaking free of their control.

Word Salad Example

Donald Trump is a world-class master of word salads:

Notice how, while saying little, he manages to go from accused to accuser

30. Your Feelings Are Telling You Something Isn’t Right

Last but not least: listen to your feelings.

And listen to me when I say this.

It’s not a good relationship if you are:

- Walking on eggshells afraid he might leave you

- Being disrespected
- Always defending yourself
- Wondering if you are crazy
- Trying to appease him
- Desperate to like him
- Plotting how to win him back
- Having wild mood swings you've never had before
- Depending on him for 100% of your happiness
- Being anxious (especially if you weren't before)
- Crying and apologizing all the times
- Afraid he might get violent

More Psychopath Signs

Finally, these traits have been found to correlate with psychopathy:

- Caffeine addiction
- Night owl circadian rhythms (ie.: sleeping late)
- Not yawning when others yawn (which most emphatic people normally do)
- Talk a lot about sex, money and food (and little about family, religion and spirituality)

One Question to Spot Sociopaths

Credit to [Susan Cain](#) for this genius question.

Cain says that empathy and a sense of proper is one of the key elements to a happy and healthy relationship.

What's one of the best ways to test empathy and respect for other people?

It's how embarrassed -or not embarrassed- people can get.

Being embarrassed by certain behavior or situation means we care.

And sociopaths and psychopaths will never be embarrassed.

So here is your question:

| What was the time you were most embarrassed?

Then watch how they react.

Normal people will know exactly what you mean. Maybe start getting embarrassed right away as they feel the pinch of their embarrassing memories.

Some people will be happy to share embarrassing stories as it helps them share their burden -and laugh about it-.

But a sociopath doesn't like that question.

He will take longer to reply because they need to make up a story.

And chances are their story will feel off.

If you are in doubt, ask for two stories.

If they can't come up with two stories that normal people would be embarrassed of, you have a major early sign he might be a sociopath.

Limitations of This Article

Some sociopaths have become good at hiding their true colors.

If they have been at it for years, chances are it won't be easy to spot them. And your task won't be any easier if you don't have any experience with sociopaths, psychology, or abnormal personalities.

This is a conversation I've had with a psychopath on Quora as I explored this topic deeper:

Me: Thank you! I'm curious about when you wrote on "wearing a mask". Do you mean to play the part and pretend to have feelings and empathy?

Psychopath: Indeed. It is a persona constructed to blend in with everyone else.

Me: I see. Do you think that age relates to how good one person becomes in molding that mask? Has anyone ever realized you were wearing a mask?

Psychopath: Yes, age means more experience. Nobody has ever realized I was wearing a mask so far. But time will tell

As you can see, it's not always easy to see the early signs of a sociopath.

However, the sociopaths who are most likely to fly under the radar are also the sociopaths who are least likely to wreak havoc in your life. Indeed, many sociopaths have a normal life with family and hold jobs. Albeit don't expect to get a great [emotional intimacy](#) with them.

Archived from theredarchive.com