

Who would I have to be?

We humans often ask ourselves the wrong question when considering dating someone or evaluating struggles in an existing relationship. The wrong question goes something like this:

Who would he/she have to be for me to be happy?

Over and over, we wrestle with this question, its answer (e.g., more emotionally available, more empathetic), and the impossible proposition of involuntarily forcing another person into what we want them to be. In reality, we should be asking ourselves:

Who would I have to be to be happy in a relationship with him/her?

Using the previous example, if the partner or prospective partner isn't emotionally available and doesn't demonstrate empathy, who would you have to be to be happy with them? Arguably, you would have no emotional needs and be ok with your partner lacking compassion for your inevitable struggles in life. Would you be happy (or even satisfied) with those conditions?

Taking stock of your partner or potential partner, complete the following table:

His/her characteristics/habits that frustrate me	Who would I have to be to be happy with this characteristic/habit?

Now, take a long, hard look at the column on the right. If you embodied everything listed in this column, would you be happy? What would life look and feel like for you in a year? Five years? Ten years?

Finally, ask yourself: Are the characteristics/habits in the left column subject to change? If so, is this person willing to put in the work to meet me where I am?

If you struggle to answer these final questions on your own, speak with a licensed professional for an expert opinion and unbiased assistance in putting this information to use.