

IS HE THREATENED BY YOUR SUCCESS?



If you've ever felt like your man has zoned out the second you bring up your recent promotion, or that he's subtly belittling your career ambitions, it may be time to recognise that he's intimidated by your success

While we like to believe that our romantic partners are the Shona Ferguson to our Connie in the way of supporting our careers, often that's just not the case. According to counselling psychologist Tenjiwe Lindiwe Bayi, having a partner who is threatened by your success is no small matter. "The dangers of staying in relationships such as these are big. More likely than not the resentment will grow instead

of subsidence," says Bayi. As women, we know what it means to fight daily in the workplace to edge our way forward in our careers. We shouldn't have to do it at home, too. "Sharon (32) knows this all too well after spending three years in a relationship in which she felt she had to downplay her excellence to appease her partner. "A part of me knew from the very beginning that he wanted to be the only 'star' in the relationship. Yet I ignored it and I ended up holding myself back to my own detriment," she explains.

WORDS: CHRISTY CHILIMAGRAS. IMAGE: PINSADDDY.

KNOW THE SIGNS

Understanding which men are likely to behave this way in a relationship means understanding which traits contribute to this kind of behaviour. Not surprisingly, it's often the men who suffer from low self-esteem that struggle to be with a partner who thrives, Bayi explains. "Men who struggle with successful women are usually men who lack maturity, emotional intelligence and self-confidence. They are commonly insecure with who they are and,

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as a result, they struggle to be with a woman who is achieving great success," she adds.

Apart from stunting your career for the 'benefit' of your partner like Sharon did, another risk of staying within this kind of relationship is that it can escalate to abuse. "In an effort to feel better about himself, he may become more verbally, emotionally and psychologically abusive by breaking you down and insulting you," Bayi warns.

Walking away from someone you love is easier said than done, but sometimes it's absolutely necessary. "When I realised he saw nothing wrong with his behaviour, I knew I had to leave or my own self-esteem would die a slow death," says Sharon.

So, is there hope to salvage a healthy relationship out of the situation? Bayi says that this depends on his mindset and you need to consider if there is enough room in the relationship for you to thrive. "Two people are involved in a relationship. In order to change anything about the way it functions, both parties need to acknowledge that there is indeed a problem," she explains. "It is important for your partner to want to change for himself in order for the process to have any chance of working."

If he doesn't, it's probably time to make more room in your life for your

own potential just as Sharon did. "I couldn't believe how much more I achieved almost instantly when there wasn't someone telling me to be smaller." **E**

**Name changed for privacy*

DOES YOUR PARTNER WANT TO SEE YOU FAIL?

According to Bayi, spotting the signs that a partner is threatened by your progress is relatively easy if you examine his behaviour:

- 1. Can he congratulate you when you excel in your career?** If he shows little or no enthusiasm or interest in news about your success, beware.
- 2. Does he belittle your achievements?** Does he downplay your achievements to luck or circumstance? If he makes comments that give credit to something or someone else that supposedly afforded you the achievement, it could mean he does not recognise your capabilities to achieve.
- 3. Is he reluctant to support you at work events** or does he make you feel guilty for attending them at all?
- 4. He turns the conversation to his own life** when you bring up your own success or ambition.