

When He Says He Needs Time To Think About the Relationship – 7 Relationship Experts Share Their Best Tips + Insights

by [Jackie Krol](#) – LCSW, [Katherine Woodworth](#) – LPC, CRC, [Sally LeBoy](#) – MFT, [Anita Gadhia-Smith](#) – PsyD, LCSW-C, LICSW, [Ellen Hartson](#) – LISW, Life Coach, [Rachel Elder](#) – LMHC, MHP, [Dana Hall](#) – LCPC, MA, TF-CBT

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“It is necessary, and even vital, to set standards for your life and the people you allow in it.”

~ Mandy Hale

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A photograph of a man and a woman embracing in a field. The man is on the left, wearing a dark shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a patterned dress. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is a soft-focus field of tall grass or reeds. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

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Katherine Woodworth



Dana Hall



Ellen Hartson



Rachel Elder



Anita Gadhia-Smith



Jackie Krol



Sally LeBoy

Let him have time + explore your gut reaction/feeling



This is never a great time in the relationship. After all, if things were great, you would not need a break.

There are many reasons why this would be the case. He could fear being happy or having a relationship or simply wants to be with other people or wants to decide if you guys are a good fit.

What you need to do is define how you feel about the time. Do you agree, are you worried he will be with other people, or that you will lose him or what? What is your gut saying about his request?

Many times, woman want to make the guy into someone they are not. What does your gut say? Not your heart or hormones. Your gut...that's right ladies, your gut.

Those red flags you see or the lack of, what are they?

How do you feel about the direction of your relationship? Is this a pattern with people they have dated in the past? Have you said, "I know he has done _____ in the past but he would never do _____ to me."? Be honest with yourself. Look at the nitty gritty of how you get along and what you want.

Definitely do not try to follow, have surveillance, Facebook stalk or anything of this nature.

Yes, I am saying do not do this. If you feel the person you want to be with needs to be tailed or e-followed, then you obviously don't have trust in them. Why would you be fighting for a relationship that you don't trust? It does not matter if they are actually doing anything or not. It does not matter if you feel it is just your insecurities.

If you do not trust them, then date longer to build that trust or move on to the next person.

No harm, no foul, you just don't fit. No bad guy. But whether it is that you are not ready, or they are not ready, stalking someone is no way to start or have a relationship.

Your personal space is supposed to be your safe place.

Forcing your way on someone is not a way to make them feel safe to build a relationship. Let them let you in as they want, as you let them in as you want. So, if they are saying they need to think about the relationship, then say "ok". The real question comes to what you do now. Now you examine your gut feelings that you keep explaining away and decide what you want.

If you want to be in the relationship, then let them think.

Define what that means with them. Does this mean you are seeing other people, not talking, going to different hang outs, etc. Does thinking mean you are not to interact until he gets back with you or are you "friends" that still do what you have been doing or what?

If you believe it means they want the night alone and the next day will tell you but you see them at a party with someone, you are going to be mad. If you expect they are going to text you in a day or so, and they don't, you will be mad. Then he will feel pressured and you may not get the answer your looking forward to getting. So be clear and be patient. No, not easy but nothing truly awesome is.

So, refresh;

- Let him have time
- Examine your gut reaction/feeling
- Be honest
- Be clear
- Be patient

You deserve to be happy, let that be the focus. Dating is meant to see if you guys will be a good fit for a more permanent relationship, you're not there yet. Once you are in a more permanent place, then you are making choices together, not individually.

Be you, be happy, everyday!

Katherine Woodworth, LPC, CRC – www.fairwaycounseling.com

Consider asking him the below questions



It's important to remember that each of us has the power of choice.

He has to decide what is best for him as much as you must make sure you are doing what's best for you. This should be an ongoing process in the relationship.

However, if you've been together only a little while perhaps this is his way of gently breaking up.

In that case, I'd ask more directly if he's interested in seeing other people.

As difficult as hearing someone is not on the same page, most would still prefer some indication things have changed for their partner compared to being ghosted.

Sometimes one partner is ready for a deeper commitment while the other is not.

If you think that might be the case, bring up the conversation regarding commitment levels and discuss each others' expectations. This may lead to an opportunity to grow together rather than feel divided.

Most couples try very hard to avoid conflict but not all conflict is bad. In fact having difficult discussions can help couples problem solve and feel safer in their relationship.

What are some additional healthy ways to respond?

You might ask:

- Is there anything in particular that he'd like to discuss about the relationship?
- Has something changed and/or does he have concerns?
- What does he envision this time away to look like? (i.e. communication, dating, length of break etc.)

No matter his answers you must decide what is reasonable to you.

There is no rule book for how long is appropriate, however during this time consider what your needs are and what boundaries you may need to set.

If you come to the decision to move on, that is your right.

He should understand the potential consequence of a break is that the other person may move on.

When we are dealing with matters of the heart it can consume us. Make sure you focus on your mental, emotional, and physical wellness during this time.

This may be a good time to connect with your support system and keep a good daily routine so you are not tempted to spend time following his social media accounts etc.

If in the end, you both decide to stay together, be sure to talk about how to have a fresh start.

You'll have to discuss what may need to change for you both to have your needs met and how can you better address concerns in the future.

Dana Hall, LCPC, MA, TF-CBT – www.DanaLHall.com

Give him all the time he needs and get on with your life



Give him all the time he needs and get on with your life!

I know that may sound easier said than done, but here's why it's the only option that makes sense.

Be clear about what you do and do not have control over. When he tells you that he needs time...that is a CIRCUMSTANCE. In other words, that is not something you have control over.

What you do have control over is how you chose to think about it, your feelings about it, and your response (behaviorally) to it.

I'm going to assume that you are interested in a relationship with him. His "needing time to think" is a way of him saying that he is uncertain about whether he wants to move forward with a relationship with you. You can tell yourself many different things about what it means, but you are just avoiding the fact that he is unsure.

Being unsure does not mean he is rejecting you. It just means that as of this moment, he's not where you are at.

So, the most important thing I DON'T want you to do, is to figure out how to get him to want it. Let that go. That is not really something you can control.

The best thing for you to do is to move forward with your life.

If you want to continue to hang out with him, that's your call, but be sure that you are honest with yourself. Do you want to be intimate with someone who is undecided about a relationship with you? There is no right or wrong answer to this question. It's a matter of what is true FOR YOU.

If you continue to spend time with him, make sure you have other things going on in your life. I recommend that you meet other guys (or gals or whoever you date) and keep your options open.

It's also perfectly okay to let him know that you're looking for a relationship and since he needs time to think about whether or not that's what he wants, that you will be moving on while he's thinking.

You can tell him that the door may still be open if he decides he wants a relationship with you, but there are no guarantees.

This is where many women get stuck due to fear.

What if he stops thinking about me if I'm not around him?

If he stops thinking about you, then I doubt his connection to you was that strong. Don't you deserve to be with someone who is strongly connected to you?

What if I'm just patient and continue to be with him until he knows for sure that he wants to be in a relationship with me?

How long are you willing to wait? I've had clients who waited years.

Based on my experience, when a guy says he needs time to think about the relationship, he's just not that into you. If you keep waiting around, you are making it easy for him NOT to decide.

If you can both agree on a reasonable "time out", then agree to that, but don't sit home staring at your phone. Get out and live your life!

Ellen Hartson, LISW, Life Coach – www.ellenhartson.com

Look at his willingness to tell you what he needs as a positive but set clear boundaries for the relationship during this time



I want you to start by looking at his willingness to tell you what he needs as a positive.

Being direct and honest in relationships is essential, and it is helpful to hear this as a step in honesty in the relationship.

While he takes time to think about the relationship, you can ask to set boundaries for the relationship during this time.

- Will you both continue to be in communication or need space?
- Will you be considered a couple or taking a break?
- Are there ways you can support him and ways he can help you during this time?

Both of you need to name what your boundaries are and share them with each other.

As he spends time thinking, I would encourage you to do some thinking yourself.

- What is it that you want and need from this relationship?
- Where do you hope the relationship will go?

Relationships ebb and flow, and it's natural for there to be periods of low relationship satisfaction or passion. You can spend this time exploring what you need for the relationship to change and grow if you both decide you want to move forward.

While taking space, I believe it is crucial to check in to see where you both are.

Too much time between talking can make it challenging to come back to the conversation. Depending on how much time is needed, I would suggest checking in weekly to see where you both are and keep setting a timeline for having the conversation.

Rachel Elder, LMHC, MHP – www.rachel-elder.com

Give it to him and ask yourself whether the relationship is really working for you too



If a man says he needs time to think about the relationship, by all means, give it to him.

It is likely that this would not be happening unless there were some relevant issues going on. This is his way of telling you that he either has issues with the relationship or issues with himself.

Perhaps this time could be good for you too.

Take some time for yourself and think about what you truly have with this person versus what you truly want. Evaluate whether the relationship is headed in the right direction or is giving you what you want.

Time is usually a gift, and a pause can generate greater clarity for everyone.

In some cases, a person might say they want time in order to ease the pain of a gradual and complete break up. Taking a break and easing up in gradual stages can feel more comfortable or manageable than just cutting the cord out right.

Give yourself some time and ask yourself whether the relationship is really working for you too.

By no means is it to your advantage to resist the idea of taking a break. Take some time, go with it, and see where your intuition takes you. You will be led in the right direction, just as he will.

Anita Gadhia-Smith, PsyD, LCSW-C, LICSW – www.drgadhiasmith.com

Ask him what he is unsure about or what is it exactly that is troubling him



If he tells you he needs time to think about your relationship, trying asking him what is it about the relationship that he is unsure about or what is it exactly that is troubling him. This way you have an idea of what's going on inside his head at this moment.

Maybe he made an assumption about something you said or did and this way you can clarify it for him right away.

Or maybe it won't be clear to him so quickly and he still needs time to think about where things are going for you guys.

If he decides to take a little time away from you in order to gather his thoughts and feelings, then you can do the same thing at the same time.

Instead of worrying what is he thinking about and why is he having second thoughts about your relationship with him, take this time to re-evaluate your own feelings for him and also the relationship itself.

- Ask yourself if this relationship is satisfying for you?
- Are you truly happy with him?
- What are the things about him that you get really frustrated or annoyed about?
- Have you voiced this to him?
- Is he willing to change?
- Are these deal-breakers for you?

Make a list of your wants versus needs in a relationship.

- Does he meet your wants and needs?

- Does he meet more of your needs or more of your wants?
- Which things on this list are you willing to forego and which do you absolutely need in a man and in a relationship?

Take this time to really think about whether or not you are happy with the way things are going in your relationship with him.

Jackie Krol, LCSW – www.psychologistjackie.com

Whenever you're in doubt, whether it's his pacing or any other issue bring it up



Relationships progress at different paces.

Some people are readier than others to move towards commitment, while others need more time. There are lots of factors that could determine the pace of the relationship. How long has he been out of a prior relationship? Does he have to factor in children? What are the stressors that he is dealing with in his life?

If his pace is slower, it doesn't necessarily mean that something is wrong or that he really doesn't want to be in this relationship.

On the other hand, if the relationship seems established and he pulls away, I think he owes you more of an explanation than “I need time to think about our relationship”.

Hopefully you have both been thinking about the relationship as it's developed and have been evaluating whether it's a good fit. If he's had doubts, he should have spoken up about them. I'm making a distinction between pacing and an abrupt withdrawal. Pacing still reflects forward progress even if it's slower than you'd like. Pulling back abruptly from a relationship probably reflects doubts and fears and those need to be explored sooner rather than later.

It's important for you to look at your own anxiety about the pace.

Are you rushing it as a way to deal with insecurity about him or yourself? Are you trying to “lock it down” to avoid a fear that you're going to lose him? Whatever the pace, there should be a mutual emotional deepening, a positive sense that you are working well together and that the relationship is on

track. Again, people move at different paces, but both should feel that they are in a positive, forward moving process.

Communication is so important.

People need to speak up about their thoughts and feelings in an on-going and constructive way. There shouldn't ever be big surprises. Sometimes people are afraid to talk about potential problems because it makes them seem more real.

Hiding from potential problems certainly doesn't make them disappear.

Talking about them is the only way to take the action necessary to either fix them or decide that they aren't fixable.

Whenever you're in doubt, whether it's his pacing or any other issue bring it up.

There's no blame, just a desire to understand what's going on so that you (and he) know how to take care of both yourselves and the relationship.

Sally LeBoy, MFT – www.sallyleboymft.com

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