

How to know if you are a cold fish?



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Do you pride yourself on being the level-headed one in a relationship? When things are going wrong, are you the one who keeps cool and analyses the situation? You could be doing more harm than good if you are always looking at things in a clinical manner.

When Sarah came home on the evening of their wedding

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anniversary, the first thing she said was, “We can’t go out, tonight.” Mike nonchalantly shrugged his shoulders. Sarah looked daggers at him. He was watching TV though it was on mute and Sarah could see from the reflection in his glasses that it was not even soccer but some stupid game show. “Don’t you want to know

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“why?” asked Sarah. “I can call up and cancel the reservations,” replied Mike. It’s not very clear from this point on who said what but it led to a big fight and a few weeks later, a visit to the marriage counsellor.

Now, most of you would think that it is Mike who is the cold fish in this relationship. However, it turned out that Sarah

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was really the one who had transacted the “cold fish” attitude to Mike. It was a case of role reversal that was caused by each partner unknowingly trying to emulate the other’s personality.

Mike used to be the center of social occasions while Sarah was shy and reticent. As a consequence, he started encouraging her to be more

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like him. It took very little time for Sarah to transform herself from being a wallflower into a very charming and attractive personality. This should have made Mike happy, shouldn't it? After all, it was his desire and encouragement that acted as a catalyst to transform her. Yet, it made him insecure.



***Pay close attention to
yourself.***

Why did Mike withdraw into a shell? Is it because Mike was an only child? Sarah had many siblings and cousins. So it was natural for her to be gregarious and confident while Mike tried hard because for him every social interaction was a potential

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popularity contest. These were some of the notes that the marriage counsellor made initially.

You often find counsellors and psychoanalysts looking back into the past trying to find explanations for your behavioral traits. Sometimes, the truth is not that far. It's staring us right in our face. However, it didn't take the

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counsellor long to figure out the role reversal that had taken place.

Sarah was never happier than when she was alone except when she was with Mike. Mike, on the other hand, craved attention.

When he was alone, he was at a loss. Even when he was alone with Sarah, he felt that Sarah was a cold fish

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because he wanted her to be like him. Silences made him uncomfortable while Sarah found meaningless talk a waste of breath and time.

Solitude and loneliness are two sides of the same coin. So while being alone was a source of happiness to Sarah, for Mike it was something to complain about. He

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felt neglected and he blamed Sarah for it, even though it was his encouragement which made her change. He unwittingly became a Svengali who brought a change in his partner for the better and in himself for the worse.



Are you listening or hearing what you want to hear?

“I don’t want to go out tonight,” is what Sarah actually said. “I’d rather spend the evening eating Chinese take-out with you than go to the fancy restaurant and interact with your friends,” is what she meant. “We can’t go out, tonight,” is what Mike claims

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he heard her say because that's what he wanted her to say. Mike had become the cold fish and Sarah, while she never was one, was perceived by Mike to be one because he wanted her to be like him.

When you watch a movie or read a story, you tend to imagine yourself as one of the characters or at least

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relate to some of the behavior or opinions that a character has. Sometimes it is not even the main characters, and it could even be a negative personality. In this sense, one of the purposes of fiction is to hold up a mirror for us to see ourselves in an entirely honest light. It is therefore worthwhile to contemplate on situations

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that spiral out of hand and think about what went wrong. It is one thing to clinically view every interaction objectively which often makes you a cold fish because you are afraid of getting hurt and thereby suppressing spontaneity. It is an entirely different thing (and often a very productive approach) to look back on events that sparked

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any strong emotions, whether it is passion or anger, examine them and try to understand why.

It is very easy to blame it on something external such as the negative vibrations or energy of a place. Some people even blame it on other people, their jealousies or the evil eye. This is all very convenient and if you really

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think about it plain mumbo jumbo. When the fact of the matter is that it could be one of you or both partners (and it almost always is) who are responsible for not making a relationship work.

So, the moment you smell fear or sense indifference in you or your partner, don't just try to quell it but acknowledge it and bring it

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out in the open. After many sessions with the marriage counsellor, Mike was finally able to come to terms with the malevolent Svengali in him who was trying to manipulate Sarah's personality. It was only when he realized that he was projecting his own insecurities that he was able to attempt to change himself back to the pleasant

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person he was instead of trying to change her into what she was not. He finally found out that to be alone with each other is not at all lonely.