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## IF YOU REALLY LOVED ME

**Dr. Noelle Nelson on classic warning signs of a dangerous relationship**

NAN PARKS

**Your new love is such a delight. Since that first blissful day you met three weeks ago, you've been joined at the hip. Sounds like the start of a wonderful relationship? Maybe not, says Dr. Noelle Nelson, psychologist and author of "Dangerous Relationships: How to Identify and Respond to the Seven Warning Signs of a Troubled Relationship" (Perseus Publishing).**



"If your boyfriend expects you to ignore your friends, skip commitments and excuse your way out of your usual visits to family so you can be with him, watch out," says Nelson.

"After a whirlwind romantic beginning, most people start to come down to earth and want to reconnect with some of the people they were close to before being swept off their feet," explains Nelson. "Let's say you tell your boyfriend (who you've since moved in with) you want to go out with your friends. Instead of appreciating that you need some time for yourself, he says something like 'Why? I thought you were going to spend the evening with me, and he begins to sulk. You go out anyway and he constantly calls you on your cell phone and asks you when you're coming home and says that he misses you. On one hand you're flattered, on the other hand it feels kind of creepy."

Nelson cautions that after a night of constant calls and you finally arrive back home, a typical controller's response might be, "If you really loved me, you wouldn't make me worry like this. Promise you won't do it again." "We have a tendency to agree to avoid a fight," says Nelson, "but we must ask ourselves what does spending time with friends have to do with you loving someone? Nothing.



Dr. Noelle Nelson

"Controlling individuals want you to spend all your time only with them; they want your total and complete attention," explains Nelson. "Even when a controlling individual doesn't want you around, they expect you in some way to be giving them attention (thinking about them, doing something for them). They don't want you giving your time and attention to anyone else."

Someone who tries to guilt you into spending more time with them isn't being loving, they are being manipulative, says Nelson. "Control can spiral into dominance, which can turn into verbal or physical abuse. Before committing your heart and soul to a relationship, take the time to make sure your new boyfriend does not want you and only you--without the friends, family and the lifestyle that make up who you are."