Love is a beautiful thing. The excitement of getting to know someone consumes you, and you find yourself up all night on the phone just listening to each other breathe. You can’t find anything else to ask them, but you know you don’t want to hang up the phone. So you just sit there in quiet bliss, and eventually, you fall in love. Okay, maybe there are a few steps I’m missing, but you get the picture. But before you say ‘I do’, here are seven ways to know if your love will last.

While I’ve learned a thing or two in my past relationships, I thought you’d like to hear from a professional so I sat down with Jennifer Wiggins, a counselor with over 20 years of experience helping young adults navigate the hardships of relationships. Wiggins credits these seven key ingredients to a healthy, sustainable relationship.

Of course, every relationship is different so if it’s been working for you, keep at it.

1. Communication is important, but understanding is key.
Every article talking about healthy relationships will likely include something on communicating effectively with your partner. Reason being is it’s so important. Have you ever been in a disagreement with your partner and you’ve told them why you’re upset and they completely miss the point. Ladies, I know you feel me. That’s because you said something that didn’t completely register with your partner, at least not in the way you hoped it would. You communicated in a way that made sense to you, but they didn’t understand your message. Just because you’re saying a lot doesn’t mean all of it is getting through. Take the time to ensure what you’ve said is landing with your partner. Simply ask, what did you hear me say?

2. You are free to be and express yourself.

If there are thoughts and feelings that you have that you are afraid to express to your partner, ask yourself why that is. You should be able to be and express yourself freely, and expect that they will respond positively. We spend enough time at work, with our families and on social media pretending to be someone we’re not so the one place you should be able to let your hair down is with the person that you have committed your physical, mental and emotional energy to.

3. Your partner should be accepting of your areas of growth.

If you continue to live and mature, you will also continue to grow and develop. That’s how this works. If you’re with someone who is questioning why you’re not the same person you were four years ago when you met, politely remind them that change is a natural part of life. We’ve all heard of a couple that broke up because they “grew apart.” But it’s possible to grow together, you both just have to be willing to let the other person flourish in the ways they need and you just be there to support them.

4. A sex life that works for the both of you.

If and when you’re ready to have sex with your partner, there should be a conversation. You should know what the other person wants and doesn’t want when it comes to the bedroom, or wherever you like to get it on (Alexa, play Marvin Gaye). If you are carrying trauma from a past experience and can be triggered during intercourse, it’s important that you communicate that to your partner. Remember, you can be in a relationship and still have rules of consent. Sex is great, but only with two consenting adults.

5. Your core values have to align with your partners values.

Everyone has core values. Often ingrained in us growing up, they shape the way we think, the way we act, what we believe and how we perceive the world around us. You will compromise on a lot in a relationship, but you should not compromise your values. If you want to know what your partner values, listen to what they say. Your mouth will always reveal what’s in your heart. Your role in responding is to think deeply and constructively about what they’ve said and how you can respond in a way that centers your values as well.

6. Know what you need and want separate from your partners needs and wants.

Just because you are in a relationship with another person does not mean your needs and wants as an individual cease to exist. In fact, you show up more present in your relationship when your needs and wants are being met. While they can be an aspect of what you need, your partner should not be your only source of fulfillment. Think about all of the people and things you need to be healthy and whole (this could include time with your family, friends, God, or simply journaling or doing yoga).

7. Listen to your gut.
If your body is having a reaction to what you are seeing and hearing, listen to it. “Don’t just listen to your mind because you can have thoughts that are not always healthy,” said Wiggins. She urges young adults to trust how their body is responding to the environment because it wants to protect you. So the next time you have an unsettling feeling, pay attention as it just might save your relationship.