

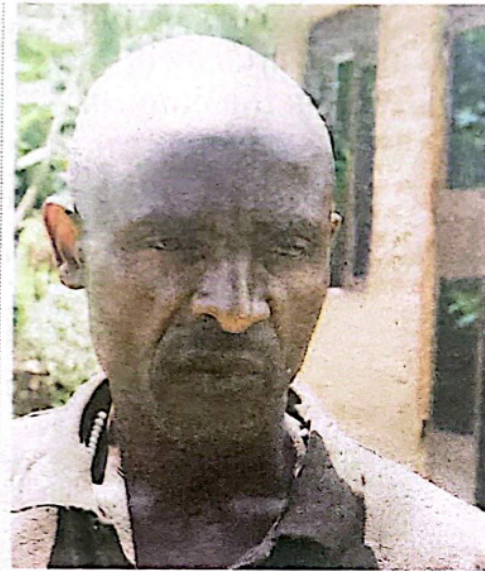
Why every relationship needs terms of engagement

We must look past the excitement of new love and ask real questions. Why are we together? Are we building something temporary or something lasting?

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Another Perspective

Last week, Fortunate Kyarikunda made news after a court sent her to civil prison for failing to pay Shs9m to a former lover. The court saw her broken promise to marry as fraud.

The judge's ruling was simple. Kyarikunda had accepted seven years of financial support and companionship from this man. She later claimed he was too old



for her and, therefore, not suitable for marriage. But the judge noted she knew his age from day one. If his age was a real problem for her or her parents, she should have ended things long ago. Instead, she stayed for seven years. The court decided that her change of heart did not erase the unwritten agreement their relationship had created.

This story is not just about law. It teaches us something important about human connection. We often enter relationships based on emotion. We follow our hearts, our desires, and our feelings. We do not stop to think about the terms

of our engagement. But every relationship, whether romantic, friendly, or professional, comes with unspoken rules and expectations. When those expectations do not match, the results can be painful. As we see here, they can even be costly.

At first glance, this looks like a story of a young woman's ambition against an older man's investment. You might feel sympathy for Kyarikunda. After all, she got her education and avoided a marriage she did not want. But we must ask, at what cost did she win? Her former lover chased a younger woman for reasons we



can guess. In the end, he got years of emotional stress and financial loss. Both people made the same mistake. They ignored the most basic rule of any healthy relationship; both people must agree on its purpose and direction. The man did not think she might want a different future. The woman did not end things when she knew she had changed her mind. Instead, she kept accepting support until the very end.

This brings us to the main point. Every relationship needs clear terms of engagement. This does not mean you need a written contract before your first date.

It means you need honest conversations, again and again. We must look past the excitement of new love and ask real questions. Why are we together? What do we want? Are we building something temporary or something lasting? Seven years is a long time. People change. Goals change. Life changes. When red flags appear, when you feel you are no longer on the same path, do not ignore them. Mark Twain once said, "A man who carries a cat by the tail learns something he can learn in no other way." But it is better to learn without getting scratched.

We should also look at the give and take in relationships. Ask yourself; who gives more? Who puts in more time, more care, more emotional energy? Loving someone too much can be like an addiction. A drug addict may steal something worse; your time, your peace of mind, your sense of self. These wounds are not just in the mind. Science shows they can affect the body. There is a condition called takotsubo cardiomyopathy, also known as "broken heart syndrome." In this condition, the pain of grief actually damages the heart. It proves that our emotions and our physical health are deeply connected. A broken relationship can sometimes break more than just the heart.

So, why do we stay in relationships that are not balanced? Why

do we keep giving when we get little in return? The answer is usually not bad intentions. No one wakes up in the morning wanting to hurt others. We are all just trying to get through life. We are dealing with our own past, our own fears, and our own deep need to feel loved. When that need is not met, or when it was damaged early in life, it can lead us to make poor choices. We stay in bad situations because being alone feels worse. We hold on to hope that things will change.

In the end, this story is not about who was right and who was wrong. It is a warning about what happens when we do not pay attention in our relationships. The man won his case in court, but his victory feels empty. His years of love and money were reduced to a court order. Kyarikunda got her education, but now she faces prison time. The way you leave a relationship matters just as much as the way you start one.

So, here is the lesson: Before you dive deep into someone else's life, know your own terms. Know what you want and what you can offer. Talk about it. Check in as time passes. Have the courage to admit when things have changed. And be honest enough to walk away before the debt, whether of money, time, or love, becomes too high to pay. When you hurt someone deeply, that hurt often finds its way back to you.