



# Should You Leave?: A Psychiatrist Explores Intimacy and Autonomy--and the Nature of Advice

*Peter D. Kramer*

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**Should You Leave?: A Psychiatrist Explores Intimacy and Autonomy--and the Nature of Advice** Peter D. Kramer

In his phenomenal bestseller **Listening to Prozac**, **Peter Kramer** explored the makeup of the modern self. Now, in his superbly written new book, he focuses his intelligent, compassionate eye on the complexities of partnerships and why intimacy is so difficult for us. With the art of a novelist and the skill of a brilliant psychiatrist, Kramer addresses advice seekers struggling with such complex questions as: How do we choose our partners? How well do we know them? How do mood states affect our assessment of them and theirs of us? What does "working on a relationship" truly entail? When should we try to improve a relationship, and when should we leave? Equally at home with Shakespeare, Emerson, and Kierkegaard as it is with Freud and Jung, **Should You Leave?** is a literary tour de force from a uniquely insightful observer and a profoundly resonant and helpful approach to resolving dilemmas of the heart. Dr. Kramer was recently asked to guest host **The Infinite Mind**, a weekly public radio show focusing on the art and science of the human mind and spirit, behavior, and mental health. Listen to the show now.

## Should You Leave?: A Psychiatrist Explores Intimacy and Autonomy--and the Nature of Advice Details

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# **From Reader Review Should You Leave?: A Psychiatrist Explores Intimacy and Autonomy--and the Nature of Advice for online ebook**

## **Jessica says**

Excellent, thoughtful exploration of why we're attracted to who we are, what that means when things go wrong, and possible strategies to turn things around. Highly recommend, although if you're in a relationship, I would vote for reading the ebook... the title is bound to get a few raised eyebrows, otherwise.

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## **Kim says**

This dense book is full of gems, like:

Part of what looks like nurture may be the child's nature, expressed in parental reactions.

To speak intimately and clearly - not trying to please or bully the other, not trying to exaggerate one's degree of certainty or uncertainty - is to experience separateness, a frightening but crucial step on the road to mental health.

One can value superficial happiness as a strength, that capacity to get along in life and enjoy certain of its details even over an underlying feeling of emptiness or dread.

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## **Jason says**

p. 134

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## **Kirsten says**

Like Kramer's other books, this one is much more than it seems on the surface -- it looks like just another self-help book for couples in trouble. But instead it's a hefty rumination on the nature of relationships and the idea of advice vs. psychotherapy. It's definitely worth reading, and it gave me a lot to think about.

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## **Valentin K says**

The book is written in a fairly difficult language. At first I was forcing myself to read since I was interested in topic.

After 40 pages I was drawn in by numerous unique ideas which I kept founding page after page. The language still feels a little too hard, but given knowledge and intelligence of author I think that its okay.

The theme - various types of relationships which lead to question in header - is looked at from various angles, and every new "YOU" has something else (interesting and quite exciting to me) to bring to the picture.

After finishing the book I feel that we have looked at a lot of types of relationships, however I don't have a feeling of closure. We are still left very open ended.

What I found somewhat disappointing, is that in very few cases author presents us with a relationship where "yes, leave" is the correct answer. Almost everytime, no matter how bad relationship looks from initial preview, we end up with "stay" answer.

Given that I was left unclear about types of relationships where author would be brave enough to advice to leave, except for few really extreme examples (extreme bad relationships from all angles).

All in all, I think that topic is one of the most important in life, and that book is a must read simply because it covers it pretty good, and presents you with a whole bunch of new ideas and important questions to ask.

Its really amazing how something seemingly obvious initially, next becomes clearly wrong just as author presents us with a few ideas or questions.

You probably won't be able to look at relationships the same way, and probably won't feel that you have the right to give anyone advice, given that author with huge experience is so unsure about it.

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## **April says**

I suppose it's not surprising that practicing therapists are often approached by friends...for a bit of free advice, or even an assessment as to just how bad (or worthwhile) is the relationship they are currently in.

Kramer presents a synthesis of the current thinking and wisdom applied by therapists in helping people understand and heal their relationships. He structures this material as an answer to a fictitious friend who is asking "should I stay or get out of" the relationship I'm in.

The best book on relationships I've ever read (despite the rather discouraging title!).

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## **Deb says**

\*As much as I wanted to, I just couldn't leave (the book)\*

As the author himself admits, this book is an "odd hybrid of fiction, nonfiction, and self-help." No doubt this book contributes a wealth of vignettes, theory, and what borders on advice. But, at times the mix seemed to be a bit too much. In addition to the high-density content, the writing of this book was often quite cumbersome and clunky.

Nonetheless, this book does provide quite a few insightful comments about evaluating whether to stay in or opt out of a relationship, including: "You are not far from where you ought to be; Whom you have chosen speaks to who you are; There are limits to how different things will be if you exchange this partner for

another; Change enough; Change yourself; Use the relationship as a place in which to grow; Expect discomfort."

Appropriately, every so many pages I asked myself "Should You Leave?" this book. But, the more time and energy I invested in this book, the more I tried to stick it out, discomfort and all. I suppose I used the author's advice of using the "relationship" (with the book) as a place from which to grow. But I have to admit, I felt much relief when I finished the last page and could take what I learned and finally leave.

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### **Lynn Weber says**

This is a really rich book, though it's not an easy read. Kramer's aim is to bring out the complexities of both marriage and therapy.

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### **Miri says**

I loved this book as much as the other books by Peter D. Kramer that I've read, *Listening to Prozac* and *Against Depression*. This one shows that he's so much more than just a psychiatrist who prescribes drugs. I love how he's willing to contradict himself, argue with his own ideas, and show that he doesn't know everything there is to know. It definitely takes some concentration to understand some of the psychological theory in this book, but it's worth it.

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### **Wendy Reiersen says**

The most successful book I have ever read that is written in the second person. It's written almost as a novel, but also includes lots of advice, if you can find the "you" that most closely matches you and your circumstances.

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### **Thibault says**

A beautiful book on the complexities of relationships! A definite read if you question whether you should stay in a relationship.

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### **jillian Woods says**

I was really into this book until I reached about 3/4 of the way in. Most of the chapters are essentially a thesis, where he presents the reader with one of several popular theories in psychiatry about relationships and intimacy. The writer then expounds on the ideas through stories involving real-life encounters with clients in his office, which are used as a backdrop to demonstrate the pros and cons of said theory. Then he wraps up the chapters with his own experience in life, as it applies to the theory, as a budding psychologist and with his relationship with his own personal guru of psychiatry.

It's all very organized and when dealing with such 'heady' stuff, I think a solid emphasis on organization is necessary to keep the reader's involved and to make the author seem credible. I can understand why people would get the impression that the book is pretentious, and I think that without this emphasis on critical thinking and organized argument, he would have lost all credibility with me and he would have come off as 'some guy trying to talk about how much he knows about stuff.' haha... The problem I have comes with the last quarter of the book. He doesn't stick to the same methods and sort of trails off when it comes to critical thinking. There's no conclusion drawn, no closing argument. I walked away feeling as if nothing was ever 'wrapped up.' This may have been the point -- that when in intimate relationships, and in your relationship to your therapist, you will never be able to identify just ONE thing that is the cause of your current state of intimacy and subsequently, there will not be ONE answer. Your therapist will never give you ONE definite answer, unless he's Freud, which sucks for you. ha ha....

In retrospect, I think that his 'closing argument' was woven throughout the book, through his emphasis on "differentiation of self." From what I can understand about this phenomenon, it doesn't matter whether you stay or leave, as long as the relationship was or becomes an opportunity for growth. I think that's a compelling enough statement that merits repeating at the end. In fact, I think you can make the same impact on your audience without going into such heady material; this idea can translate easily into fiction, a short story, a poem, a memoir, etc. However, I'm going to trust that the author must have known something about his audience to write it in the manner that he did.

Either way, it was fun to hear the thought process of a psychiatrist and his take on what makes relationships work. All in all, I liked it.

\*NOTES WHILE READING: The title is a little lame... but the book is fascinating! It's more of a narrative. If you've ever sat across from a doctor and wondered, "What does she REALLY think?" or "Why can't you give me a straightforward piece of advice?", you'll like this. Kramer is a FANTASTIC writer!

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### **Jack says**

Some interesting thoughts revealed for self-exploration and consideration, though written in a style probably not suited for everyone.

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### **Michal says**

The title is provocative although a little misleading, even though that question is addressed. The subtitle more accurately captures this psychiatrist's fascinating accounts of his interactions with some of his patients.

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### **Ed says**

I don't remember reading this but my notes from it are interesting, so it must be good.

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