THE QUESTION

Asking for commitment

“How can I ask for a committed relationship without pushing someone away - or abandoning what I need?”

“Pushing someone away” and “abandoning what I need” name two possible losses. In the first, the other person goes. In the second, you stay close but something you wanted becomes hard to say. There is a small word between them, “or”, as if asking might mean having to choose which loss you could bear.

Your cast pairs a figure of great strength with a line about how it feels when the day’s work is done and a person is still awake to its consequences. The line ends with an unexpected kindness. Even where there is something at stake, there can be “no blame”.

That phrase matters because of the word “pushing”. It allows for a possibility your question hardly gives itself: someone could hear the full truth of what you want, answer differently, and neither of you would have wronged the other.

YOUR CAST



01 THE CREATIVE



10 TREADING

The marked line is the third from the bottom. It is the only line that changes. This example starts with the question above and this cast.

THE PRIMARY FIGURE / HEAVEN ABOVE HEAVEN

What is steady in a wish?

All six lines of The Creative are solid. Both trigrams are Heaven. The image is of Heaven following its course, day after day. In the Judgment, the quality that gives this strength its value is steadiness. Read beside a question about commitment, “steadiness” has a particular ambiguity. What, exactly, is being held steady?

One possibility is fidelity to the wish itself. An answer is still open, and the wish has a shape before that answer comes. There is something quietly creative in being able to name it. The words “what I need” give that part of the figure a place in your question.

Another possibility is holding a particular future fixed. The sentence might then carry a second, much harder question inside it. Is there a way to ask that would keep this person close whatever their own wish turns out to be? The care in choosing the words could feel very similar in either case.

A word to linger over

“Commitment” might mean exclusivity, a shared intention to build a life, or the freedom to name an existing bond aloud. Each gives the same cast a different shade. If exclusivity is what matters, the risk may be discovering two different hopes. If the bond already has a shape but lacks a name, the risk may lie in hearing it named differently by two people. The word belongs to you. Its meaning changes what is at stake.

What would I still mean by “commitment” if I knew the other person was free to give any answer?

Source for the primary figure · The Creative

THE MOVING LINE / NINE IN THE THIRD PLACE

After the day's work

"Active all day, still watchful at nightfall. The situation is dangerous, but there is no blame."

AI Ching's rendering of Hexagram 1, line 3

The day is a time when effort has an object. A person can find a word, change a phrase, try again. At evening the doing falls quiet, but awareness continues. This turn from day to evening is what line three adds to a reading of The Creative. It gives tireless strength a moment in which there is nothing more for effort alone to settle.

In your question, "How can I ask?" belongs to daylight. It imagines something you can shape. "Without pushing someone away" reaches past the asking, into the hours when the words belong to the person who heard them too. The line gives an image for that interval. It makes sense that care could persist there, even after the work of finding the words was finished.

Then comes "no blame". It is easy to read backwards from a painful answer and decide that the asking itself must have been wrong. The line holds danger and innocence in the same sentence. A risk can be real even when no fault has been committed. Equally, sincerity alone cannot tell us how words will land. Both thoughts fit within the line's watchfulness.

The question the line opens

If an honest answer hurt, what would help me distinguish the pain of a difference from the feeling that I had done something wrong?

Read the full line · Hexagram 1, line 3

THE RELATING FIGURE / HEAVEN ABOVE LAKE

What changes when one line opens

Look again at the two figures on the first page. Five lines are identical. The change occurs at the top of the lower trigram, where an unbroken line opens in the middle. Heaven remains above. Below it is now Lake. The result is Hexagram 10, Treading.

Its Judgment pictures a foot on a tiger's tail. The tiger does not bite. For a question framed around "pushing someone away", it is tempting to give the tiger a name and imagine the other person's reaction. A different reading leaves the animal in the image. What the image captures so well is the sensation of a step that matters. The person who takes it can feel where their own foot is. The tiger has a life of its own.

One detail is easy to miss. Even in a story whose ending is merciful, the tiger is still a tiger. The text preserves the weight of the encounter. It gives no grounds for predicting a yes. What it offers this particular question is room to think about how two freedoms might meet, with all the tenderness and uncertainty that entails.

Something to come back to

These two lines can be kept as a private note. A few words beside each may be enough. There is space to type here or write on a printed copy.

When I wrote "pushing someone away", the answer I was imagining was …

When I wrote "what I need", the thing I most wanted understood was …

Read the relating figure · Treading / The Creative in love