

***Love, Mating and
The Rest of Your Life***

How Not To End Up With the Wrong Person

by

R. J. Cogle

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This mini-guide is in every sense a joint venture. Others who care about the subject matter and the success of this guide helped me in many ways. Without their assistance this work would have been a bland academic tome or an essay on mating. It was the contributors who gave it life. Unfortunately their names must remain in the background. I was but a catalyst, a coordinator and synthesizer.

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CONTENTS

TO THE READER		ix
CHAPTER 1	FIRST IMPRESSIONS	1
	The Primal Urge	2
	Creating the Mating Mind	3
CHAPTER 2	BEFORE THE AUDITION: THE 3 CRUCIAL STEPS	5
	STEP 1 What Are You Looking For?	5
	STEP 2 Understanding Your Love Map	6
	STEP 3 Preparing for the ‘Interrogation’ - Getting the Low Down	8
CHAPTER 3	DIGGING FOR THE ‘REAL PERSON’	9
	A Note of Caution	10
	The Checklist	11
	Dinner or a Movie?	11
	Setting the Agenda	12
	The Personal Profile	13
	Interpersonal Comparison Tests	13
	The ‘Interrogation’	13
	Blinded by Good Looks	14
CHAPTER 4	ISSUES THAT ARE MAKERS OR BREAKERS	17
	The Five Disconnects	17
	The Family - Fitting in	19

	Shared Values	20
	Ken and Judy	20
	Common Interests	21
	What You See Is What You Get	22
	Donnie and Julie	22
	Is Your Path The Same?	22
CHAPTER 5	THE REAL HOT TOPICS	25
	Approach with Caution	25
	The Exes	26
	He'll Change ... and Other Myths	27
	Feelings Don't Lie	28
	Brad and Jen	29
	Sex Talk	30
	Rebounders	30
	Kevin and Wanda	31
CHAPTER 6	A KEEPER OR A BLEEPER?	33
	Don't Ignore the Flags!	34
	Sherry and John	35
	Rate Your Date	35
	The One Month, Three Month and Six Month Assessments	37
CHAPTER 7	REALITY CHECK	39
	The First Month Assessment	39
	The Chemistry	40
	Intellectual Attraction	40
	Are We Equals?	41

	The Dangers of Contempt	41
	Your Inner Voice – Your Best Friend	42
	The Verdict	43
	Listen to Your Friends	43
CHAPTER 8	THE DTR	45
CHAPTER 9	SEX: THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE	47
	Sexual Urges	48
	Carol and Tom	48
	Are You Ready?	50
	The Sexual Revolution – Good or Bad?	50
	Now, Later or Never?	51
	What Does the Church Say?	51
	The Naked Truth	52
	The Kiss	53
	What’s Considered Sex?	54
	The Cuddle Chemicals	54
	Postponing Sex – A Good Idea?	55
CHAPTER 10	TO WAIT OR NOT TO WAIT: 7 THINGS TO CONSIDER	57
	Young Wisdom	58
	For Girls Only: Raising the Bar	59
	The Final Decision	60
CHAPTER 11	HOT CHEMISTRY & REAL LOVE	61
	The Right Love	62

	Time is Your Friend	62
	Boys will be Boys	63
	According to Dr. Bob	63
	What is Love Anyway?	64
	Get Real	65
	Deep and Profound	66
	Love in Action	66
	Love A Blending	67
CHAPTER 12	THE THREE MONTH ASSESSMENT	69
	Love, Intimacy or Friendship?	69
	It's in His Kiss	71
CHAPTER 13	THE SIX MONTH ASSESSMENT AND LONG TERM POTENTIAL	73
	Love and Liberty	74
	Kathy and Brad	74
	Equality and Other Essentials	75
	The First Disagreement	75
	Bonding	76
	Trust Your Intuition	77
CONCLUSION		79
RECOMMENDED READING		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
APPENDICES		

To the Reader

Have you ever given any thought as to what your chances were of having a successful life long relationship? Here are a few startling statistics. There is 1 in 350,000,000 chances that you will be killed by a terrorist by age 40; 1 in 15,000 that you will be involved in a serious automobile accident and about 1 in 2.4 chances that you will be divorced, separated or unhappy in a relationship. While it is true that there are millions of good relationships, more than 40% of all marriages and cohabitations end badly – either in a divorce or separation – a very sobering statistic. Divorce is pandemic.

The effects of relationship failure and divorce can be devastating. Many of us have witnessed firsthand the results of a dysfunctional or broken home. Families apart at Thanksgiving and Christmas, children shuffled back and forth between parents, family violence, custody battles and bitterness. A tragic loss of human potential. And for what reason? Often the cause is no more complicated than mismatched partners – good people that should not have been joined together. They were just not ‘right’ for each other. In most cases it was simply a matter of not having learned the skills necessary to select the right life partner.

Relationship failure is often as painful as divorce. In fact they are often referred to as ‘mini divorces’. The trauma can leave emotional scars that last for many years and sometimes prevent a person from ever finding a suitable mate. A life of being alone and a string of disappointing relationships is a huge price to pay for not learning how to select a suitable life partner and build a life long relationship. Whether we are 16 or 60, this is a skill we need to acquire.

It is always best to select a suitable mate early in adulthood. But how does one know if he or she is ‘the one’? Often we are confused. Is it love or just overactive hormones? Infatuation or a genuine connection? Are we compatible? How can we know for sure if we are really in love?

These questions raise other questions. What mating paradigm is most suitable in this time of no relationship guidelines? What does a healthy relationship look like? Researchers tell us that men and women no longer know how to relate to each other in a manner suitable for choosing the right mate. What is the solution?

And then there is sex. Sex is said to be the bonding agent of romantic love. What part should it play in the dating/mating scenario? Studies would seem to indicate that divorce and relationship failures often have their genesis in the premarital/cohabitation stage of a relationship. Sex too soon can often blind us to otherwise obvious warning signs of incompatibility. But sex is natural as well as enjoyable, so how do we handle it? To bed after two dates, six dates, three months, several months or wait until marriage? These are all questions that require a definitive answer if we are to significantly reduce the pain and trauma of failed relationships.

It is my sincere hope that this mini-guide will help you answer these difficult questions in a manner that is meaningful to you. Whether you are sixteen and in high school, or forty-five and just divorced, the same rules apply. We are still single people looking for love. The process that we must follow is the same. As intelligent human beings we owe it to ourselves to use the same logical approach that we use for other aspects of our life. So let's set the hormones and chemistry aside while we learn together the art of selecting the right life-mate.

But can one actually acquire these skills, you might ask? The answer is a resounding 'yes'. All that is required is some effort. Because this very important life skill is not taught in our high schools and universities, we, as individuals are forced to stumble along, learning as we go and hoping for the best. Tragically, this is not working. Two university degrees and two professional certificates did not teach me what I am trying to impart to you in this writing - all they did was teach me how to do the research and organize the internal reflection necessary to understand the process. Most of what I learned, I learned the hard way – I have cried the tears, felt the pain and experienced the separation of a failed marriage. I would do anything in my power to prevent the same thing from happening to you. Which is the primary reason why I wrote this mini-guide – to help teach the basic skills necessary for selecting a suitable mate - one with whom you can build a sustainable long-term relationship. It is unfortunate that I, and many others of my generation, did not have an opportunity to learn the skills that are necessary to choose a suitable mate. Not only did this affect us but we passed our unskilled relationship techniques on to the next generation. These skills are essential to our future well-being and I am convinced that most of the emotional pain, the loneliness and the broken homes could have been avoided, if only we had been better prepared.

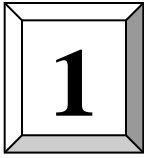
In times past it was different. In my parents' generation for example, the process of mate selection was through dating. In high school a boy would meet a girl he liked and ask her for a date. This could be a school dance, a lunch after school or a movie.

He would actually go to her house, meet her parents and the two would leave together. After a few dates if they ‘clicked’, the two would become a couple and go ‘steady’. Physical involvement normally developed gradually over a period of months as the relationship progressed. This allowed for romance and courtship, which was a time of getting to know one another. Intercourse may or may not have happened before the couple married. This all changed in my generation of the 60s. Courtship was jettisoned along with romance to a large degree. By the end of the 60s the sexual revolution and the feminist movement combined to set in motion our current paradigm. There are no longer any rules or even established guidelines. It is not surprising that we do not know how to select a suitable mate under these conditions. We are trying to build relationships on sand instead of laying a firm foundation on rock. We lack an ‘instruction manual’ that is relevant in this current age. I hope this mini-guide will help fill the void. My goal is to replace the anxiety and confusion of mate selection with clarity and insight.

I hope this mini-guide will provide the tools needed to help find the right life-mate for you. Everything worth having takes effort; if you follow the assessments I have provided for you and refer to them for guidance, you will be amazed at the results. You have nothing to lose by taking the time to go through this guide and possibly a lifetime of happiness to gain.

Wishing you a successful future.

Jim Cogle



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

If we are going to create a more humane world, it's important to discover how to form sustained relationships that fulfill our deepest needs and contribute to an atmosphere of caring that the culture is crying for.

- Hugh Delehanty
Editor, UTNE Reader

Let's face it; the initial attraction for a member of the opposite sex is almost always physical. According to the famous anthropologist, Jared Diamond, "...all of us know that when we walk into a room full of unfamiliar people, we quickly sense who attracts us physically and who doesn't. That quick sense is based on "sex appeal," which just means the sum of the body signals to which we respond, largely unconsciously." What Professor Diamond is saying is that something about a particular person causes us to give them that second look. There is some attraction beyond just appreciation. We want to be in their space because we find them nice looking, well built, pretty eyes or something else that attracts us to them – some physical attribute. However, if there is potential for a relationship there will have to be other attractions too, but 'looks' are usually the first consideration. You either like this person's looks or you don't. According to some writers this is immediate and predictive based on certain unique personal preferences. Referred to by psychologists as "thin slicing" it is said that we make up our mind about a potential mate within the first few seconds after we meet them. And, apparently, if we are intuitive, our initial assessment can be very accurate. We either have a mating interest in them, or we don't. If we do, our first impression will often impact the next mating stage. This is

why at this point we must guard against the ‘halo effect’ - meaning that we are so impressed with the person’s good looks and/or charm that we let this influence the situation more positively than is warranted. This is a human tendency. If someone is good looking we tend to ascribe other positive traits. But just because he is handsome does not mean that he is kind, caring or, more importantly, that he is a potential mate. She might be beautiful on the outside but ugly on the inside. Prince Charming could be just a barbarian in nice clothes. First impressions can be very misleading. Remember the old adage, “Never judge a book by its cover”.

Once we have done the 'thin slicing', which is said to be 80% visual information, and establish that there is an interest, we begin the information collection and assessment stage. This is one of the most critical stages in the mate selection process. A mistake during this phase can cost you a lifetime of misery. This is not a time for equivocation or for a “if it’s meant to be it will be” attitude. This is a time for careful, calculated assessment of every aspect of the person with whom you have developed an ‘interest’. Before you even think about getting involved with this individual - no matter how charming or good looking – you need to gather some pertinent information. To help you in this regard the following pages will outline the basic guidelines required in terms of selecting a potential mate. Therefore, this could well be the most important document that you will ever read.

The Primal Urge

The first thing to keep in mind when considering a potential mate is that you are approaching this person on two distinct levels: the primal and the intellectual. People confuse the two to their detriment. They are quite distinct and must be understood as such. Primal mating instincts involve the very essence of our biological being and have their origin in the distant past. They include such attributes as sexual attraction, shape, form, mannerisms and smell. Those things that make for ‘chemistry’ with a person. Together they help form our internal “love map” which determines why we are more attracted to this person than another. Our intellectual capacity for mate selection is different. It has been developed over our lifetime and includes our sociological environment, parental teaching, family life, religious teaching and other 'learned' information. Both levels of assessment are important so let’s take a moment to look at the major elements of each one. Keep in mind as we do this that my separation of the two is somewhat arbitrary. Both aspects of the mating urge have

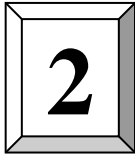
ties to our very distant past. The reason that primal attraction or 'chemistry' is so important is because it is essential as a motivator for mating and because it is so powerful. Powerful and delusionary are probably the best words to describe this primal attraction. At some point in our lives most of us have experienced, or will experience, a deep physical attraction for a person of the opposite sex; this could be the guy with the stern jaw and deep blue eyes, or the girl with the cute smile and nice body. This is all part of being human. But...when physical attraction becomes the main attraction or forms the nucleus of a budding relationship, trouble is usually not far down the road. This is why we need a well-trained intellect to help us see that behind the pretty face and nice body resides a person. A person who may, or may not, be a suitable mate. Training your intellect to be objective in the areas where it is most important is the primary focus of this mini-guide.

Creating the Mating Mind

Why, you might ask, does my intellect require training? Firstly, because your mind contains so much misinformation, half-truths and outright falsehoods. As comedian/philosopher, Will Rogers, once said, "it ain't so much what we don't know, it's that so much we know ain't so". Nothing could be more true when it comes to the mating process. The second major reason that our minds need reprogramming is that our social setting has changed dramatically over the past few decades. The old rules no longer apply. Like Bob Dylan sang in the 60s, "...the times, they are a changin'". The third, and most important reason that our minds need to be retrained, is because our future happiness depends on it. You simply cannot afford to play Russian roulette with your life. We need the ability to know love from lust, compatibility from incompatibility and real commitment from a well rehearsed script used to acquire a sexual partner for a while. Keep in mind, as you read this little guide, that with your current skill set your chances of choosing a suitable life mate are just 40% at best. Yes, that bad. Maybe even worse, depending on how you read the data. Consider that about 40% of marriages, and cohabitations, end in divorce and, according to sociologists, about 50% of the remaining 60% are unhappy but stay together anyway. So there is the stark ugly truth. Statistically speaking, you have about a 1 in 3 chance of being happy with your selected mate after ten years. Not very good odds when you think about it.

If you knew that when you bought a car there was a two in three chance of a major accident, would you buy one? Not likely. Yet, an unhappy marriage can in some ways be worse than a car accident. But still a lot of people don't get the picture - they expend more effort choosing a car than they do selecting a mate. Are you going to be different? I hope so. If not, this guide is a waste of my time and your money. We need to learn to use the same analytical skill set that we use in other aspects of life when choosing a life partner. Tossing your brains out the window and letting your hormones take control is not an option. Our brain must rule our body if we hope to select the right mate.

So let's get started on a journey that I hope will help us learn the art of mate selection.



BEFORE THE AUDITION: THE 3 CRUCIAL STEPS

Step 1 - What Are You Looking For?

The necessary first step in mate selection is determining what you want. After that, it's generally avoiding the mistakes that most people make. While knowing what you want sounds easy, you will find that most people have difficulty in this area. It takes absolute honesty and genuine self-reflection to know what is best for you. As psychologist, Carl Rogers says, "you are the best authority on yourself". So what type of relationship are you looking for? This is a decision that should be made before you meet someone and can only be determined by you. If you are still in high school, you probably (hopefully) are just looking for occasional dating or a boyfriend/girlfriend. Should you be in your early twenties, then a serious relationship may be what you want. By mid to late twenties and into your thirties, a life partner is probably your primary objective. If you are beyond 40 and still looking for a mate, I suspect by now that objectivity might be in short supply. Whatever your stage in life, it is essential to know the type of relationship for which you are looking. And regardless of what you decide, be honest with yourself and be honest with any potential mate or date that you meet. Also, be aware that what sometimes begins as casual dating soon turns into a serious relationship regardless of your age or situation.

During my research, one of the most delightful, romantic stories that I heard was between a sixteen year old girl and a seventeen year old boy. They were truly in love and had a very meaningful relationship before her father violently broke them apart.

Just a little cautionary note: Men are seemingly far more likely to be satisfied with a casual/sexual relationship than women. Women tend to be more monogamous, preferring one man over several. Be clear about what you want. Smart women control all aspects of the relationship in the early stages. A man must be made to earn your trust and to prove himself across many situations and several time lines. Don't be too quick to assume his intentions are synonymous with yours. A roll in the hay and a "call you someday" may not be exactly what you are looking for.

Once you have decided what type of relationship you want, you can proceed to step two. This step is very significant and probably one of the main reasons relationships fail. Most people, regardless of their age, never determine what they are looking for in a mate. It's true. Talk with almost any young adult and they could not tell you what specific qualities they are looking for in a mate beyond good looks. They fail to fully acknowledge their "love map" or to develop it. Not doing this is like shopping for a car and not having a clue what you want except that it has to be red. What about the motor, the seats, the tires and the safety rating? Do you want a sports car or a sedan? A mini-van or a Cadillac? You get the picture.

Step 2 - Understanding Your Love Map

A person is born with a basic "love map". You are pre-programmed to prefer, to some extent, a big mate or a small one, slim or chunky, tall or short and a specific set of personality characteristics. Don't ignore your love map. This specific brain circuitry cannot be altered - you are stuck with it. You may appreciate a person who is not exactly your 'type' but you will likely not mate with them. And if you do, in most cases, you will regret it. So why waste your time? Spend this precious commodity making yourself ready for the right life mate. Notice that I did not use the term 'perfect' mate because there is no such thing. You have many potential mates, some more suitable than others. This is where fine tuning your selection criteria and training your intellect can be very important.

While you cannot alter your basic "love map" you can - and must - determine the qualities that you want in a mate. And also the ones you don't want. WRITE THEM

Before the Audition: The 3 Crucial Steps

DOWN. That's right. Take a piece of paper, or go on your computer, and list what basic qualities you want in a mate. (I am aware that this sounds totally anal – but it works). I have included one as a guideline.

Mate Qualities (Sample list)	
Loyal	Educated
Honest	Self-confident
Affectionate	Romantic
Compassionate	Interesting
Good sense of humour	Thinker
Caring	Reader
Ambitious	Non-smoker
Reliable	Appreciates good literature
Intelligent	Appreciates good music
Appreciates nature	

Most divorcees or ex-relationship people will tell you that had they done this, they would never have married or co-habited with their ex. This little exercise combined with being true to your internal love map will dramatically increase your chances of mating successfully. Don't procrastinate; life is too short. Please write your Mate Qualities list today. Caution: Be sure to build some flexibility into your basic qualifications list. These items are not etched in stone. Your list is intended to be a guideline and not an engineering plan. Buddy may not be six foot four and play football, but he might be the kindest, most passionate five foot nine writer that a girl could ever meet.

Step 3 - Preparing for the ‘Interrogation’ - Getting the Low Down

The first thing on which we need to focus after we have decided what we are looking for, is avoiding the mistakes that lead to inappropriate mate selection. What you don't do wrong in this case can be more important than what you do right. That first “WOW! I am interested”, has to be followed by a series of appropriate steps. While the initial encounter is often euphoric and memorable, it has to be attached to some concrete data if the attachment is to last beyond the initial encounter. Typically, people meet in some social setting. You see the person, she sees you and you arrange for some form of verbal interchange. The conversation begins with some benign topic such as the particular event you are attending, the weather and/or people that you know in common. Commonality is usually the ultimate goal during the first conversation. Who is this person? Where do they come from? And, who do they know that you know? In other words, do we have a shared background? What do we have in common and where are we different. The old adage that “opposites attract” is almost never true. We are usually attracted to people like ourselves, from similar backgrounds and the more that we have in common, the more likelihood of a successful relationship.

Usually a couple will meet and arrange to make conversation. From here they either start down Mistake Road or turn onto Right Avenue. Which road they choose depends on several factors. Since about 50% will take Mistake Road, the next chapter will cover the most common mistakes and why people make them.

TO DO LIST



- 1. Write down a paragraph describing the type of relationship you are looking for.**
- 2. Write down the qualities you want in a mate.**



DIGGING FOR THE ‘REAL PERSON’

The first mistake is the most common and also the easiest to rectify: Not getting enough information. The solution to this problem seems simple - get more information! But it is not that easy. People don't always tell the whole truth. Not only are they less than truthful, they sometimes try to impress. When, for example, the goal is to have sex or the chronic need for love and/or a relationship, the tendency is to not 'rock the boat' - I don't want to turn him or her 'off'. Sometimes in the initial stages of the mating paradigm you find people who lack the courage or the confidence to truly be themselves. We may have to dig to find the real person. It is said that men are the worst offenders in this regard and I can't argue with that statement. As a female friend of mine said one day, "men lie". So do women, but seemingly not as often and not so blatantly. It takes courage to present yourself as you really are, but it will definitely pay off later. Generally, the more candid that you are from the beginning, the more likelihood of having a good relationship later. **Honesty and happiness are directly related.**

A Note of Caution

Some intimate details of your past life can be omitted if they are very personal and not relevant to a potential relationship. Some would say they should be deleted from our life script. My friend Ronnie was dating a girl who on the second or third date told him that she had previously had an abortion. As Ronnie's says, "that was too much, too soon." The abortion was something that did not need to be shared.

Why do people equivocate and mislead? There are many reasons. They lie to get sex, probably the most common one. They lie to hide something in their life or their past (beware of the mysterious type) and they lie to impress - many people have an inferiority complex. Lying for sex is very common. Men want to have sex with women and most have, according to Dr. Bob Berkowitz, at some time or other, lied to get it. They pretend to be far more interested in the woman than they actually are or use some setting to impress her. Dancing, dinner, a sports car ride or plain old flattery - whatever it takes. This is not regarded by anthropologists as particularly nefarious, just part of the mating game. Men are hunters by nature and are goal oriented. Women are the objects of the hunt and the goal is sexual intercourse. Make no mistake about this. It is a situation as old as time. And again, probably as old as time is that women fall for the same old lines. They swoon when they hear, "you look lovely in that dress" (in earlier times maybe the cave man said, "wow you look good in that musk ox skin.") or, "my.....your hair looks great". Not necessarily a major problem when both parties understand the rules of the game - but potentially lethal if they are taken at face value. Seemingly women, more than men, tend to ascribe unwarranted significance to compliments. And while they may well be genuine, they may not necessarily be meant to initiate a long-term relationship. It is essential to sift through as much information as possible before even thinking about commitment of any kind. Going light here can make things awfully heavy later.

The Checklist

Whether you are interested in casual dating (if there is such a thing) or a relationship, there are certain things you must know about your prospective date/mate. Many people have sailed into very troubled waters by not getting adequate background information. Ask yourself this question: What is the least that will make me happy? Make a list of these things and look at it often. Then get enough information until you are sure that your potential mate will not contribute to your being less happy. Of course, **no one can make you happy, no matter how much they love you or you love them, but the wrong person can make you very unhappy** - just ask anyone who is divorced or trapped in an unsatisfactory relationship. No amount of love will rectify a poor choice when it comes to choosing a mate. According to Helen Fisher, a renowned anthropologist, the euphoria of romantic love lasts no more than eighteen months so there had better be lots of real love, caring, respect and congruency to take its place. Happy couples tend to have a lot in common so make sure this is true of those you date. Spare no effort in determining exactly the kind of person you are with. Make sure that "what you see is what you get". And remember that time is your friend when it comes to choosing a mate. Many couples make their biggest mistakes before the euphoria of 'falling in love' has worn off. Many inherit a lifetime of misery for their folly.

Dinner or a Movie?

How do we get enough information you ask? The best way is to ask lots of questions; something that most people fail to do. The first two or three dates should be primarily information gathering ventures. But here is what usually happens. Couples go to the movies, go dancing, driving, etc., which keeps them from meaningful verbal contact. This quasi isolation can go on for quite some time and often prevents any real dialogue. Many couples are fairly involved before they even get to know each other, or worse - they may be married by this time. It would be shocking to know the number of couples who have intimate physical involvement before ever having an in-depth conversation. No wonder the divorce/unhappiness rate is so high. Some researchers believe that the sooner a couple gets intimately

involved the more likely the relationship will fail. Allegedly, sex too soon, because it induces the bonding hormones or ‘cuddle chemicals’ as they are called, creates an artificial bonding process that can preclude the gathering of vital information. Researchers also say that if you are intimate with someone you are far less likely to notice vital warning signs. Little clues that indicate the relationship is not really viable. Sex too soon can sometimes mean love too late.

Setting the Agenda

I don’t want to over simplify the information gathering process. Cornering a potential mate to have adequate conversation is not always easy, but is nonetheless absolutely necessary. Unfortunately women have to take the lead in this little venture. You must arrange time early in the mating process to have plenty of conversations. What he thinks about it is irrelevant - it’s your future that we are talking about. Meet for coffee before the movie, or after. Go dancing later, talk first. Not at his place or at yours. A quiet coffee shop, restaurant, pub or library, will suffice. Anywhere that you can both relax and talk is fine. You both have an agenda, so keep that in mind. And if you don’t, you should have. It is in your common best interest to get the quantity and quality of information that you require. And if he sits there and stares off into space or generally seems disinterested, he will also be disinterested later – only more so. “He is just not that into you”. So make sure he doesn’t get there before meeting your criteria and playing by your rules. You set the agenda.

Wise people have ‘phone conversations and plenty of e-mail exchanges before actually dating. Walking together, having lunch, afternoon coffee and Sunday brunch are great casual ways to get to know each other and exchange information. And if a person is really interested in a relationship, they will want you to know everything about themselves so that you will not be disappointed or feel misled later. In today’s world, I suppose this sounds idyllic, but there really is no substitute if you want a successful relationship.

Don’t be timid. Some people are afraid to make the situation seem like an interview. But, in a way it is. You and the other person are auditioning for a part that could last for fifty or sixty years. Spare no questions; be specific and don’t be afraid to get verification for the answers. Your future happiness could be on the line here.

The Personal Profile

Another great idea very early in a relationship is to send each other an e-mail or letter describing yourselves. Ask each other the question: How would you describe yourself? This is psychologically very sound. People tend not to lie when they are writing to a specific person. Online profiles are often filled with little embellishments and equivocations. However, when the story is directed toward a specific person and will be retained for future verification, people tend to be a lot more candid. Be sure to cover your entire profile and make sure he covers his.

Interpersonal Comparison Tests

To help you further understand your potential mate and your compatibility, we have included two interpersonal comparison tests (Tests A & B) in the appendix at the back of this mini-guide. Test C is also a fun exercise for you to do together.

It will surprise you what you might learn about yourself and your potential mate. Once you have completed these tests, you will know each other much better without the nervous tension of interrogation. Please be sure to try it. You can blame me if it doesn't work. Don't forget to keep it light and have fun with this process!

The 'Interrogation'

The interrogation (I know this sounds awful) can be approached in several ways. Questions can be subtle or straightforward depending somewhat on the person and the situation. Be open. Let the person know that you are interested in getting to know them - even if only as a friend. (Some of your best friends of the opposite sex will come about as a result of potential mate encounters). Tell the person that you don't 'play games' and that you don't expect them to. Men are notorious game players and women can be just as bad. Playing games is totally counterproductive. If there is no real potential, don't be afraid to admit it. Sometimes two people just don't 'click' as a couple but can learn a great deal from each other and become good friends in the

process. I have become good friends with some of the women that I interviewed for this mini-guide series. So, this will be a win/win situation if you are both honest. You will either gain a mate or a friend, or both. Couples who are friends first tend to be happier and stay together longer.

What you should both be looking for is an opportunity to evaluate the true spiritual and intellectual essence of your potential mate or friend. Does this mean you have an agenda? Yes, it does. And as I mentioned before there is nothing wrong with having an agenda as long as it is benevolent and you share it with the other person. "Let's get to know each other" is the absolute best place to begin a relationship of any kind. If only people would take this approach they could spare themselves and their children a lot of misery.

Please do not interpret this to mean that you can't have fun during the information/evaluation stage. Quite the contrary. There should be plenty of laughter, fun and excitement. People who are too serious and too boring, make neither good mates nor good friends. Let this be a pleasant time of learning and insight. Much of what you gain in life will come from enjoyable conversations with people whom you meet along the way. Some of my best memories involve sitting in the Student Union Building at university, engaged in meaningful conversation about topics that matter in life. We had great debates in an atmosphere of candor and acceptance. Although we often disagreed, we were always able to walk away and remain friends.

Blinded by Good Looks

But what if he won't talk? Not a problem; don't see him again. But he's so good looking you say. So are lots of other men. If he won't, or can't participate in a meaningful conversation - you don't want him. He is either not that interested in you, only wants sex, has something to hide or isn't very bright. When a man is really interested in you, he can talk your ear off. Just listen to my friend Joan. "Doug and I spent our first several dates in extended, pleasant information gathering conversations. Neither one of us was at a loss for words. The more we talked the more we came to like each other and appreciate each other for who we really are. On our first real date we both agreed to be completely candid with each other and to never tell a lie or equivocate - and we haven't. Doug and I agreed to be completely honest and to present ourselves exactly as we really are in every situation. This has made for a relaxed, carefree relationship where there is no second guessing, no worry about what the other is thinking and no concern about infidelity. If we have an issue

we deal with it at the time. We talk things over, reach a compromise and move on.”
Honesty works.

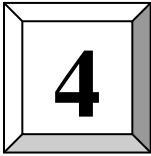
I cannot overemphasize this point. To have a successful relationship - of any kind - it must be based on absolute honesty. This requires that you have the courage to be your true self - 24/7/365. Nothing else is more important. Only you know what will make you truly happy. You, and you alone. So make sure that you get enough information to adequately assess a potential mate – “if he ain’t right, take flight”.

TO DO LIST



- 1. Make a list of the things that will make you happy in a relationship.**
- 2. Prepare a personal profile describing your likes, dislikes, etc. and exchange it with your potential partner.**

NOTES:



ISSUES THAT ARE MAKERS OR BREAKERS

The Five Disconnects

Before we get too far into this discussion I want to acquaint you with the five major disconnects and also some minor ones. All are important but any of the big five can derail a potential relationship. The five major disconnects are: music, money, manners, intellect and nature.

Music

If you love country and western music and he is big into classical – it probably isn't going to work. These two genres of music attract a very specific clientele with usually, but not always, a unique set of characteristics.

Money

The same goes for money. If you are a saver and he or she is a spend thrift, then give up while you are ahead. Savers and spendthrifts usually have a totally different world view and life perspective.

Manners

Manners can also mean the end to relationship potential. If she burps and belches audibly, you may want to avoid public appearances. This same rule applies to table manners. A person's deportment is a clear indication of their upbringing and their level of refinement. If you are cultured and she is not, the two of you will probably have difficulties. Once people have reached maturity they seldom change.

Intellect

This is also true regarding a myopic mind. People who are at different levels intellectually will eventually have problems. How can you have an intelligent conversation with someone who doesn't read or think? They will eventually bore you to death. As my friend Wendy said about her ex-husband, "Ricky never reads anything and I love to read. We eventually had very little to talk about. That's when I met Ronnie. I was taking a course at the university and he was in my class. He was so intelligent and so well read. We soon went from discussing books to a romantic encounter".

Respect in a relationship demands that people be intellectually similar. That way one does not look up to the other, both are on an equal footing and talk across to each other. Intellectual connection is vital to a healthy relationship and so is your connection with nature.

Nature

If one of you loves the outdoors and the other doesn't, the relationship will be strained from the beginning. This is a very deep and profound issue. A love of nature envelops one's entire being and has a very significant impact on the way we approach the whole of life. Nature lovers are a unique breed. They tend to be quiet, conservative caring people who love and respect the earth. They are the opposite of the speedboat/SUV crowd. And they almost never change. Should you not be one of these people, you will probably never properly connect with one who is.

Building a healthy, long-term relationship is difficult enough under the best of circumstances - try not to try navigate one of the five major disconnects. If you are not together on music, money, manners, intellect and nature, don't invest any more of your valuable mating time.

I hope that by now I have convinced you of the importance for honest conversation and question asking. But what are the most important questions that you

must ask? You must ask all of the questions necessary to get complete information in the following areas: Family background, values, interests, goals and ambitions. You also need to know about his political, religious and social perspectives. And last, but certainly not least, you need to know all about his previous relationship(s) and what he is looking for now. Don't be afraid - get right to the point. As General Patton said, "no guts - no glory". Far better to crash on the second date than the twenty second. Get right down to the nitty gritty. Why did the person's last relationship end? How long ago?

The Family - Fitting in

Family is very important. The more compatible your familial experiences have been the easier it will be to have a successful relationship. While this is not true in all cases, it is true in most cases. If his father is a plumber with six kids and little education and yours is a professor with two kids and a Ph.D., you will probably have difficulties. Your social customs, life experiences, values and perspectives will, in all likelihood, be quite different. You need to fit with his family and he should fit with yours. By fit I mean be comfortable with, somewhat like birds of a feather. It is important that you feel at ease with each other's family. For this reason before getting involved be sure to have a very candid discussion regarding family. Family background, traditions, attitudes, values, accomplishments, weird relatives etc. are important. I know what you are thinking: "I'm not mating with the family, just Jennifer." Wrong. She was raised by that family, so you are getting the whole package. The in-laws can very soon become the out-laws. "The first time that I met Susan's sister and brother-in-law, and then other family members, I knew it was a go", Steven told me. "They are all very easy and relaxing to be around and I knew these were good people from similar backgrounds with whom I could identify". He shared with me that his ex-wife's family were also fine people but he could never identify with them. They came from a very different background with a very different world view. He always felt like an outsider even though they went to great lengths to make him feel welcome. Birds of a feather really do flock together so make sure you flock with birds like yourself.

Shared Values

Along with family background, shared values are an absolutely essential aspect of a successful relationship. You will probably never be happy with or connected to a person with whom you do not share a common set of values. In fact, this is far more important than common interests. Nothing can create more tension in a relationship than incongruent value systems because they impact so many aspects of life. People with dissimilar values often approach the same issue or activity from very different perspectives. These include among other things, how you treat yourself and those around you including your mate. Health, hygiene and exercise are affected by values. So are your spending habits, work ethics, political opinions and social perspectives. Goals, ambitions and your life plan are all based on a value system. It is possible for couples to find common ground without compromising their core values. They can sometimes learn from each other and create an even better set of values. This, however, is the exception rather than the rule. Usually, in time, incongruent value systems will put the relationship in the failure bin. Might take 20 or 30 years of unhappiness but rest assured it will happen. Abraham Lincoln said that, “unequal friendships seldom last”. Neither do those with unequal value systems. Researchers say that couples with different values almost never form a stable, contented union. Eventually on some, or many critical issues, you will walk separate paths. This will cause both of you to feel isolated and alone in your relationship. You will, in a very real sense, be together but apart. Not being able to stand with each other, you will eventually stand alone. Spare no effort in evaluating each other’s values.

All values are important in a relationship, but none more important than how to raise your children. A difference here can be deadly.

Ken and Judy

This is what my friends Ken and Judy overlooked. Because they were so attracted to each other from the start, their very dissimilar backgrounds and value systems were not an issue. That is until they were married for a few years. Then reality set in. Especially once they had children. Because of their diverse backgrounds, each had a very different idea about how to raise children and these divergent views became more pronounced as the children got older. By the time they were teenagers, Ken and

Judy were having their own version of the Cold War – not outright aggression, just an armed stand off. Could this have been avoided? To use a Sarah Palin expression “you betcha”. If Ken and Judy had spent more time talking and less time making out, they would never have married. As Kenny says, “Judy looked so good in that black dress; it took me years before I realized the full extent of our mistake. The first time that I visited her folks I knew that I would never fit. But of course I ignored my inner voice (intuition) because we were so physically involved. The great sex blinded me to the reality of the situation.” Judy tells essentially the same story. “Ken was so handsome and fun to be with that I didn’t realize how different that our basic value systems are. We didn’t talk enough. He and I are really quite different. The first time I went to Ken’s home and met his family I knew these were not my kind of people. A good family but very, very different from mine. We just didn’t ‘click’. But I was crazy over Kenny and blind to the warning signs.” Sadly this story is very common. People from different backgrounds with different value systems get together because they are so attracted to each other. There is nothing like hot chemistry for cooling the brain. It often comes down to hormones versus intellect. Not always a fair fight. Ken and Judy paid the ultimate price of a late life divorce.

Common Interests

Common interests are almost as important as shared values. If she is an avid golfer and you can’t stand the sport, (like me), chances are you will spend a lot of time by yourself. The same is true if he likes to be fishing all the time and it bores you to tears. Common interests make for better bonding and a more interesting life. The two of you need some activities that you both like so it is essential that neither of you pretend to like something that you don’t. You must also have your own interests, but these should be secondary in the overall picture of your time together. The bulk of your leisure time should be spent in mutually enjoyed relationship reinforcing/bonding activities. This is why it is essential that two people honestly look at who they really are before plunging into a relationship. Things are unlikely to change later - you are who you are. He is who he is. Don’t expect major changes.

What You See Is What You Get

A further word of caution is warranted. Men and women are notorious for getting into relationships with the idea of changing the other person. It almost never happens, and when it does you may not like what you have created. Be careful that you don't make this mistake. People can change, but usually don't. Potential is not performance. If she drinks too much now she will probably drink more later. His nasty streak, which is usually indicative of serious underlying issues, is not likely to go away. People only permanently change behaviours when they are ready and that time may never arrive. A person may temporarily alter their negative behaviours for you but don't count on a long duration. Proceed on the basis of "what you see is what you get". And what you get will always be that way. In other words, don't set yourself up for disappointment.

Donnie and Julie

My friend Donnie began dating this lovely looking woman a few years ago. She admitted to "having the occasional smoke" but only "seldom" and only "in social settings" and was going to quit "for good". He suspected otherwise but was so attracted to her that he began making excuses even though he detested cigarette smoke. She did finally quit but soon began smoking again "occasionally" after she had Donnie sufficiently "hooked". It eventually became clear that Julie is an addict, loves to smoke and will probably never really quit. Donnie simply could not bear to be with a smoker so he left her after wasting a year and a half of his life trying to reform her. Smokers and non-smokers can seldom form a relationship. Julie is still smoking and Donnie is still looking.

Is Your Path The Same?

Does your prospective mate have any realistic goals? Does he/she have enough ambition to achieve them, if, in fact, they exist? So many people have fallen in love with a person's potential even though they have no life plan whatsoever. Goals are

what most clearly define a person, especially a young person. What do they plan to do with their life? Will they attend university or technical school? Maybe a trade or apprenticeship? Where does this person see him or herself in 5 or 10 years? These are absolutely necessary considerations. A lack of goals and plans are among the top reasons for failed lives and unrealized potential. Don't be lured into a web of dreams - look for substantial plans. A great idea is for you to both write out your goals and plans then compare them. A written set of goals and plans is absolutely essential for staying on track. Write them out and review them often. This can be a good indication of whether or not you are headed in the same direction. Don't sail together toward an obscure destiny - there is too much chance of arriving in the wrong place – instead, have a common destination.

TO DO LIST



- 1. Write down your first impression of his/her family**
- 2. Compare goals, ambitions and your life's plans with your potential partner**

NOTES:



THE REAL HOT TOPICS

Approach with Caution

Not many years ago, young people were advised to never talk about religion or politics. This was for two reasons. The first was that these issues can be very divisive and the second was because it was assumed that the family position on these matters was the correct one. The unfettered discussion of religion and politics plus social issues, the other taboo subject, began primarily in the social revolution of the 1960s. During this great period of emancipation people, mostly young people, began openly discussing the existence of God and the merits of being Conservative, Liberal, Democrat or Republican. This was probably the first time in history that this situation occurred among the masses. These discussions in times past were reserved primarily for small groups at the universities. You may recall that only a few hundred years ago you could be burned at the stake for even questioning the inspiration of scripture, let alone the existence of God. You can still be ostracised for such investigations - approach with caution.

The new intellectual liberty of the 60s will be of little value to you in mate selection if you do not exercise your rights. All of the delicate topics must be explored with a potential mate - the sooner the better. At some point most people identify with one religious persuasion or another, (although many today have no religion) and one of the political parties even if they are not actively involved. Wise people have thought through their positions and can discuss them intelligently

without feeling threatened. Both religion and politics are filled with ‘grey areas’. Some people adopt a rigid position regarding their politics and their religion. These same people often hold extreme positions regarding social issues as well. When challenged, even to a mild discussion, they get upset and defensive. This is the hallmark of a goon. Beware. If you don’t want to mate with a goon, pay special attention to how he behaves when discussing these sensitive issues. Make sure that you understand, and can appreciate (or at least accommodate) your potential mate’s political, religious and social perspectives. Under ideal circumstances, the two of you will arrive at shared positions to which you both contribute. But remember, nothing less than accommodation and respect will allow for a successful relationship. Toleration won’t work. Peace is not simply the absence of war. Issues always resurface in these delicate areas. You are obligated to share your opinions and perspectives - don’t hold back. Your first Christmas Eve is not the time to tell him that you always go to midnight mass with the family, only to learn that he is an atheist.

The Exes

Past relationships are another potential danger zone. As mentioned earlier, determine why his last relationship failed, how long since it ended and what did he learn. Keep in mind of course that what you hear will be his side of the story. It may be edited, shaped and interpreted as is all human history from an autobiographical perspective. Therefore, as in all other issues, don’t be afraid to ask questions. This is a delicate area but you must proceed - just do so cautiously and listen carefully. How he handles this issue could be a very reliable character indicator. For instance, if he blames it all on the ex, a yellow flag should appear on your internal mind screen. If he trashes her, it should be a red flag. People who trash their ex are usually sub-standard at best. If she is defensive or irritated by your questions, beware. She is likely hiding something - something you should know. The proper and responsible way to handle past history is to be candid, assume all due responsibility, exclude intimate details (these usually come out later) and tell the whole story in such a manner as will present an accurate picture. A candid exchange of past history can be very enlightening and educational if handled correctly. Learning from each other’s past can cement a friendship and/or help form a love bond.

He'll Change ... and Other Myths

Denial is the mark of a moron. Yes, I said itmoron. This may not be politically correct, but it is true. Sticking your head in the sand is totally asinine and totally without excuse. The issue will always surface again - "red flag" issues never go away and often get worse with age. Just ask anyone who has finally left a rage-oholic, an abuser, a not recovering alcoholic, an obsessive gamer, an emotionally disturbed person, a doormat or a control freak. They will tell you it was a dreadful experience that stole years from their life. And when they entered into the relationship almost all of them thought the same thing: I can change him; she is only like that sometimes, or, the dumbest one of all, "things will change once we're married". **Never** delude yourself in this regard. In most cases, you will be leaving – he won't be changing. And ...you could be leaving with two or three kids and a load of debt.

Women, because of their female/nurturing internal constructs, to use a psychological term, are notorious for harbouring ludicrous beliefs about changing men or helping fix them. They may be the way they are because of what happened in the past, but you, no matter how good you are, can't fix years of abuse. Many secretly believe that old urban myth, "love conquers all". It doesn't. No amount of love will cure serious emotional, psychological or behavioural issues. Not ever. You cannot be mate and shrink rolled into one. It won't work, don't even try. Suggest that he go for help, and if he won't, sever the relationship. There are plenty of well adjusted "normal" people out there and all you need is one of them. What I am trying to say here is NEVER make excuses for someone's bad behaviour no matter what the cause. "He only hollers at me when he gets angry" and "I know he loves me". "Donnie only slaps me when he is drinking - most of the time he is fine". "He ignores me and flirts with other women when we are out, but at home he is all over me". These are the excuses of weak women trying to justify the fact that they don't have enough courage, or intelligence, to deal with 'red flag' issues. Please do not become one of them. If you do, as I said before, this mini-guide is a waste of my time and your money. If he continually hurts you in any way, emotionally or physically, he doesn't love you. Whether you are in grade 10 contemplating your first boyfriend or fifty-two and back in the single scene, **DON'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR BAD BEHAVIOUR.**

Carol had a husband who was notorious for flirting with other women even when she was present. He could catch a woman's eye and give her a smile that revealed an appreciation that was unacceptable from a married man. He would strike up a conversation with women and have them eating out of his hand in no time. He did

this indiscriminately and in totally inappropriate situations. He was a charmer and Carol was a door mat. She would put up with his inappropriate behaviour even though it caused her great emotional pain. It was years before she found the intestinal fortitude to kick his butt out the door for good. Flirting can be a useful means of communication in the attraction phase of a boy meets girl situation but can be poison in an established relationship. Flirting or any other behaviour that causes distress should not be tolerated.

Feelings Don't Lie

What is the absolute best barometer for any behaviour? Your feelings - they don't lie. If a particular behaviour makes you feel bad, it is a bad behaviour. If it makes you feel good, it is a good behaviour. It's that simple. A put down will always make you feel bad and is thus bad behaviour. This is the antithesis of love. Kind words always make a person feel good, thus good behaviour toward another person is the essence of love. People that make you feel bad don't love you. Unfortunately, it takes some people a very long time to realize this simple fact. A man or a woman who consistently makes you feel bad doesn't love you. They may not even like you. And all the good sex in the world will not change the simple fact that you are not loved. When you are not loved, you are not loved.

Let me be clear; I am a man, and according to most people I know, a kind man. So I am not against the male species, as some of my statements may seem to imply. It's just that I look at things straight on. My assessments are based on the facts as they have been presented to me through literature reviews, research and anecdotal evidence. The data clearly indicates that men generally do not treat women as well as women treat men. Sorry, but it is true. Most women are kind, caring, nurturing people who only want equality and appreciation in any given situation. Fewer men are like that. Men often, but not always, like to control, manipulate and set the agenda. They will equivocate or tell outright lies to get sex and then wonder why women are suspicious and cautious. Duh! Men are far more likely to exhibit disingenuous behaviours toward a woman than a woman is toward a man. Consideration is not usually a dominant male trait. (I too have been guilty in this regard). When it is, you can be almost certain the man had a fine mother who gave him a good upbringing or a loving woman that was able to train him later in life. So, having said all this, what is the solution to male misbehaviour? Again, it is simple.

Women need to stop re-enforcing the bad behaviour. If he is saying or doing something that makes you feel bad, bring it to his attention. Tell him directly. It has been scientifically proven that men do not hear subtle things like hints and suggestions – clear statements are the only way to get the issue addressed satisfactorily. Once you have told him exactly how what he is doing makes you feel, ask him to cease. If he doesn't, then take action. Give him an ultimatum. (We men like ultimatums because then we know where we stand and thus will have far more respect for you). Tell him that if the actions don't cease, the relationship is over. No matter if it has been one month, one year, or ten years or, like a friend of mine, twenty-five years. Don't whine, don't cry (maybe later) and, above all, don't procrastinate. When you know that you have had enough - leave. There will be other relationships and even if there aren't, you are better off alone than with someone who doesn't love you. Everyone deserves to be loved.

Brad and Jen

One of the women that I interviewed for this mini-guide had an interesting story. She had been married to an unsavoury character for twelve years. Finally, she had taken all of the neglect and lack of appreciation that she could so she packed up and left. Her husband was shocked – as they often are. He made great promises, cleaned up his life and began pursuing her in earnest. Brad said he just couldn't live without Jen. “Without you, life is not worth living” he said. And of course tons of “I love you and I will never treat you that way again”. Finally Jen agreed to go on a date with him. Brad was a complete gentleman. He showered kindness and affection on her like when they were first dating – only better. He was “a changed man”. Eventually Jen agreed to move back in with him. And true to his word, he treated her much better. He stopped doing those things that upset her and continued to treat her with lots of love and affection. For about a year – then, slowly but surely, the old Brad was back. Two years later, Jen left for good – having wasted two more precious years of her life. The good news is that Jen is currently in a wonderful relationship with a man she loves. Brad, the real Brad, has finally ‘found himself’ and has become the person he always wanted to be. Someone very different from what Jen needed in a life partner. But as dad used to say “there is a Jill for every Jack”. Brad is with a woman just like him and I think they are happy. The moral of this little anecdote is simple: If Brad and Jen had followed the suggestions in this mini-guide they could have saved

themselves a lot of anguish and wasted years. Like Jen says, “the warning signs were there but I ignored them because I thought he would change. He never did”.

Sex Talk

I suppose that you are wondering why I have avoided the topic of sex. I’m not. Getting sexually involved too early in a relationship is one of the most stupid things that you will ever do. There is probably nothing more damaging to the ultimate potential of a relationship than having sex too soon. Once the clothes come off, the blinders usually go on - especially with women. Seemingly, once women get sexually involved (regardless of age) they have to somehow justify their behaviour. While for some guys it is no more than a great sporting event, women seem to have to justify it with love. This is why Brenda Pollard recommends holding off on sex during the first few months of a relationship. She says that, “As long as no one gets naked there is less risk of anyone getting hurt.” We will revisit this in Chapter 9.

Rebounders

Before we leave mistakes and ‘red flag’ issues, there is one other huge alligator still in the pond. The rebounder. Is your potential mate still on the rebound from a previous relationship? Again, it doesn’t matter if you are in high school or being re-circulated at mid life - the rules still apply. People on the rebound can be hazardous to your heart. Why is this? Because all too often a rebounder is looking for pain relief - not love. They want someone to fill the void of a loss in their life. Someone, anyone, to quell the agony of being alone. Often they are looking for pity and validation. Many times this need for validation manifests itself in an early eagerness to get sexually involved. Rebounders look to sex for the intimacy they so desperately need and miss. They can literally be using you for “replacement material” or as a prop to show the ex that they can be happy. Some warning signs can include your looking like the ex; her remembering too many times and events with the ex, and keeping his picture around. Refuse to be a stand-in for someone else. Keep your eyes and ears open. Avoid all of the heartache you can. Life has enough at the best of times.

Kevin and Wanda

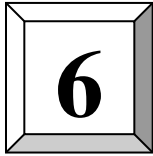
Kevin was on the rebound when he met Wanda. His marriage, which was “really great until Kelly ran around” had ended only about two months before he met her. She too had been married but it had ended three years before Kevin came roaring into her life. It was “wonderful” at first. Here was this nice guy who seemed “totally gone” on her. She loved the attention. He took her out constantly, sent her e-mails every day, called every evening and just did everything he could to show that he cared. And he did care for her. There was only one little problem – he was still grieving for Kelly. He was enjoying Wanda but missing Kelly. After about a year of hot romance and “fabulous times together” Wanda realized that she was just “filling in” for Kelly. Wanda told me “Kevin just couldn’t get over her. He tried not to mention her or compare me with her, but he just couldn’t help doing it.” Kevin needed time to grieve and yet, as so often happens, he had jumped right into another relationship. Wanda was “totally in love with Kevin” and was deeply hurt when he finally terminated the relationship and moved on to another woman. Don’t let this happen to you - make absolutely certain that you are not dealing with a person on the rebound. The rebounder can cause more heartache than you ever want.

TO DO LIST



- 1. List any behaviors you don't like in your potential mate**

NOTES:



A KEEPER OR A BLEEPER?

Nothing is meaningful without evaluation. Are you not glad that your doctor has to pass medical exams before he is allowed to carve up your carcass or diagnose your illness? This can be especially true when it relates to the human mating paradigm. You must constantly and critically evaluate the progress of the relationship along predetermined time lines. And, nerdish as this may sound, keeping notes or evaluations in a diary can be a valuable tool down the road. It is always good to be able to refer back and get a more accurate history than your memory will allow. Jot down your impressions - things that were said - your feelings at this particular time and where you see the relationship on the scale of one to ten. Believe me; you won't regret doing this little exercise. That is, unless you are dishonest with yourself. You must be completely candid. No sugar coating and no wishful thinking. The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. This could be the rest of your life that we are talking about. So take the time, no matter how busy you are, and be honest, for your sake and theirs.

Don't Ignore the Flags!

Now, having had the wisdom to continue reading this little guide, you are ready for the magic word. And the magic word is *counterintuitive*. It means going against your intuition – the little voice inside that tries to protect you. This word, because of what it represents, is by far the most important word in the Successful Life vocabulary. No word or concept is as important. Not love, not sex, not caring and not commitment. Counterintuitive upstages all of these. Because once you go against your intuition, nothing else has meaning. Dr. Sam Harris of Stanford University says, “Whatever its stigma, ‘intuition’ is a term that we simply cannot do without, because it denotes the most basic constituent of our faculty of understanding.” Your intuition, or “gut feeling” is there to protect you from harm and heartache if you will but cooperate. Have you ever approached a situation and just known it was not right? That was your intuition trying to protect you. That little voice who is always ready to keep you out of trouble. There is, in every human, a place deep in the brain that calibrates your every encounter. It collects data from all of the senses and processes them from the perspective of “Is this person (or thing) good or bad for you?” It is your intuition that sends out the yellow caution flags and the red warning flags. And every time that you ignore one of these flags, you do yourself a great disservice and imperil your emotional health. Your intuition should be your best friend. Who else will be so honest or care for you so much? Get to know it well and listen to it often. And don't insult it by going against it. You will always be the loser. If your intuition says “don't go on that second date” - stay home. If it says “don't have sex” - keep your pants on. Intuition is the center of love inside you, your constant companion and perpetual watchdog. Feed it with constant reflection and show it the respect it deserves. Never, not ever, argue with it – because it is never wrong. The most important word in this entire mini-guide is *counterintuitive*. Please don't ever ignore the voice inside. Your ‘gut feeling’ is the best arbitrator of what is right and what is wrong for you in personal encounters. Listen carefully.

Sherry and John

Sherry said it best. We were sitting in the coffee shop one afternoon talking about relationships and how we were trying to improve our chances for happiness. She said, “You know, Jim, when I look back, the signs were all there. I remember on about our third date a little voice inside of me said it would never work for John and me. But I was lonely at the time and liked the attention from a man. Plus John had a lot to offer. He had a good job and came from a good family. But there were, as you say, little warning signs. John looked at other women when we were out; he walked ahead of me and didn’t really like to kiss. Later he began paying less attention to me and actually flirting a bit with waitresses and others. When I told him that this bothered me, he brushed it off as unwarranted paranoia. But that little voice inside me said otherwise. Again, I dismissed it. John was really funny, the sex was good and we did have fun together. I was also worried that I might not meet anyone better. My intuition still kept sending little warning signs and I kept ignoring them. Once we had set a wedding date, I felt it was too late then.” Twenty-one years of unsatisfactory marriage and three children later, Sherry wishes that she had listened to her intuition.

Rate Your Date

The essence of evaluation is honesty. Honesty with yourself first, and then with others. Shakespeare said, “Unto thine own self be true and thou shalt be false to no man.” The initial evaluation should be after the first real conversational encounter or ‘talking date’. Find a place where you can have some quiet time to reflect using the following check lists: (yes, I know this sounds ridiculous but try it anyway – it works).

Checklist #1

1. What are your first impressions? (These can be very accurate).
2. How do you rate your feelings for this person on a scale of 1 to 10?
3. Does this person seem to be impeccably honest?
4. Is this person worthy of another date?
5. Could you see yourself with this person a year from now? Five years from now?
6. What is the level of physical attraction? 1 to 10
7. What is the level of intellectual attraction? 1 to 10
8. Are there any caution or warning flags? (Or little uneasy feelings). List them.

Checklist #2

If you have satisfied your intuition and you have decided to see this person again, add the following questions after each successive date:

1. How am I being treated? (VERY IMPORTANT)
2. Are there any inconsistencies in what he says and what he does? List them.
3. Why am I going forward with this person? Be honest.
 - I am lonely and/or desperate to have a man/woman in my life? ____
 - I am afraid that I won't meet someone and he is OK? ____
 - I want to try sex or will trade sex for some intimacy because I am lonely?__
 - He/she is a caring person that I truly enjoy being with and can see the potential for a relationship? ____

Remember: Although this may sound old fashioned, it is still true. Dating a person with whom you would not have a long-term relationship, is a waste of time at any age. It robs you of the opportunity to meet someone with whom you could have a good relationship. When it comes to finding a suitable mate, never settle. "It's a

funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it” – William Somerset Maugham.

At this point, I want to stop and thank you for staying with me through some fairly involved material. Hopefully, you are finding it useful and will practice the insights in your life. According to my calculations, if you follow the suggestions in this little guide, your chances of a happy, long-term relationship will increase by about 80%. I am aware that I am making what should be an enjoyable experience sound terribly clinical but in today’s complicated world there is no other alternative. Mistakes in this vital area are simply too costly. I may sound like a stuffy old person, and maybe I am one, but that does not take away from the correctness of what I am asking you to consider. Under ridicule for some statement that he made in the British House of Commons, Lord Manchester rose to his feet and said, “Mr. Speaker, while it is true that I am a man of many faults, being wrong is not one of them”. You simply can’t afford to be wrong when it comes to mating.


The One Month, Three Month and Six Month Assessments

After the first month and several dates, it is time for another critical evaluation. This one will be more in depth and have more focus. At this juncture you know each other better and will have some idea of whether or not the relationship has any real potential. ‘Quality’ will be the operative word.

To a large extent, the quality of a man, and of a relationship, is what women create. Sorry ladies, but it’s true. Settle for poor quality and you will get poor quality. And the reverse is also true. Insist on being treated well and that is exactly what you will get. This is why it is critical that you decide early on what you want in a partner and what type of relationship. To help you with these critical evaluations there are assessment questionnaires in Appendix A of this mini-guide. They are designed to help increase your chances of getting the type of relationship you want. Yes, the whole idea of an in-depth evaluation may seem ridiculous now, but it will pay huge dividends later. Just ask any divorced person, or those who are unhappy in a long term relationship, if a graduated assessment process might not have prevented them from selecting the wrong mate? The answer will almost always be ‘yes’. Those people know the emotional pain of chronic misalignment. One purpose of this mini-guide series is aimed at the prevention of relationship pain. Never inflict unnecessary

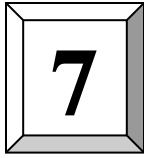
emotional pain on yourself. There is no pill for this type of pain – the residual damage can often affect us for years.

TO DO LIST



1. Do Checklists # 1 and # 2

NOTES:



REALITY CHECK

The First Month Assessment

At one month you will need to address some critical issues. Not just lightly go over them but actually invest some serious head time and heart time. An hour spent now could mean years saved later. Most divorces and relationship breakups are the result of inadequate evaluation and the failure to establish the relationship on a sound footing. The operative word for the one month evaluation is ‘progress’. To what extent has the relationship progressed over these past four weeks? What is your intuition saying? How do you ‘feel’ when you answer the necessary questions? Be honest and you can avoid a ton of heartache and potentially save years of your life. I recommend that you find a quiet place, turn off the music and the computer and get down to serious business.

Determining what aspects have changed during the first month, may point the direction for the rest of the relationship. Will you be friends or lovers? Start with something simple: Do I like him/her more or less after knowing him for these past four weeks? If the answer is less, then obviously you need to go no further. ‘More’ indicates that the relationship has potential; if you ‘don’t know’ then that is generally a sign of trouble. Usually after a month or so, you should either be closer to the other person or growing away from them. No in between. Lukewarm doesn’t cut it when it comes to relationships.

The Chemistry

Is there a deepening physical and intellectual connection? Never underestimate the importance of physical attraction. It is the stuff of life. As much as some may not like it, the male/female connection is very important. And at the center of it is physical attraction. The main difference between a lover and a friend is the chemistry of attraction: The primal urge to mate. Without this mating urge, the human race would obviously cease to exist. But, during the pre-mating stage of relationship development it is absolutely necessary to control the sexual component of the chemical attraction. More than one potentially great relationship has been destroyed by allowing the sexual urge to set the agenda. There is nothing, and I stress nothing, that will blind a person to potential warning signs more than sex. Sexual involvement, especially from the male perspective, can completely take over a relationship. And the better the sex, the truer this statement becomes. Good sex can quickly make for bad love if it occurs too early in the relationship, or before those involved are ready for its obscuring effects. Remember, a little truism: Sex too soon can mean love too late.

Intellectual Attraction

While physical attraction is important, intellectual attraction may be even more important. You will ultimately do more talking than making love. If you cannot enjoy a good conversation with your mate, the relationship will usually be strained. Hot chemistry cools. In fact, under the best conditions, anthropologists claim that the euphoria of 'falling in love' cannot last more than 18 months. Eventually, we are all faced with heat being replaced by warmth. It is when this 'companionate love' sets in, after the relationship has been established, that the importance of intellectual attraction becomes paramount. This is why early in the relationship, you need to assess your level of intellectual attraction for your potential mate.

University of Virginia psychologist, Daniel Wegner, says that relationship development can be understood as "a process of mutual self-disclosure". To be effective this process requires trust, honesty and intellectual attraction. At the end of one month you should be able to gauge the level of this attraction if you have followed my previous suggestions and done some serious talking. Talk, walk and

laugh is my formula for a successful first month. Keep the communication open and all else closed.

Are We Equals?

Along with physical and intellectual attraction, it is very important that you regard your potential mate as your equal. **Equality is essential.** You must view him or her as your equal in every aspect of life. That does not mean that he or she does not have talents that are superior or inferior to yours in some areas. Nor does it mean that your families are exactly equal either. What equality means is that overall you view this person as being your equal sociologically, intellectually and emotionally. This way, as previously mentioned, you will not look down on this person or up to this person, but across to them. This will open the door for you to learn from each other and grow together. Couples who view each other as their equal will have better communication, solve problems together more easily, and treat each other more kindly. To quote Abraham Lincoln again, “unequal friendships seldom last”. This is especially true when it comes to male - female relations. There must be equality, and there must be respect. Without these you will eventually have nothing.

The Dangers of Contempt

Psychologist, John Gottman agrees with this sentiment but has discovered that in relationships there is another characteristic that is more predictive than all others: Contempt. Contempt ‘is any statement made from a higher level’. It is different from criticism, more like a subtle talking down to. The survival of a relationship, according to Dr. Gottman, is directly proportional to the level of contempt. By listening to only a few minutes of conversation he and his team can predict with 90% accuracy which couples will survive and which ones will fail. Many years ago I went to pick up a colleague at his house. He and his wife had been married about two years at the time. I remember being really surprised by the way they spoke to each other. Not nasty but not kind either. Certainly not what I would have expected for people married such a short time. They just sort of talked down to each other. I now recognize this as contempt. John and Marg stayed married for about ten years and

two children before they ended their relationship. Years later Marg told me “there were just things about John that I couldn’t accept”. She went on to say that they were not “big things” just “little things that got on my nerves”. Little things that bother us and/or general lack of full respect build up over time and can form the basis of contempt. This in turn leads to relationship break down. A good reason to spend time learning everything you can about a potential life partner. Our intuition can be great at detecting contempt if we allow ourselves to hear what our partner is actually saying instead of what we would prefer to be hearing. The time to detect contempt and establish equality is early in a relationship. This cannot be over emphasised. Equality and mutual respect are absolutely essential in every aspect of the relationship.

Your Inner Voice – Your Best Friend

As mentioned previously, I cannot stress enough the importance of listening to your intuition. In the first month evaluation, (I know this sounds very clinical) is what I call an ‘**Intuition Scan**’. Listen carefully while you let your intuition run through every aspect of the last month. How he treats you in public; how he treats you when you are alone; his dialogue; his habits; his attitude in general; his attitude toward things that really matter to you and his overall demeanour. Is he punctual? Does he drink too much? Use foul language? Does he talk with you enough? Is he aggressive? Any other behaviours that concern you. Now quiet down and listen carefully to what your best friend, your intuition, is telling you. Are there any areas where you have doubts, concerns, or just plain little uneasy feelings that you can’t explain? Write them down on paper in as much detail as possible and stash in a safe place for future reference. Yes, I know this sounds terribly nerdy, but it works. Try it and you will see that I am giving you good advice. Sherry, who I mentioned previously, says that if she had done this little exercise it could have saved her a lot of grief and twenty-one valuable years.

The Verdict

So now you have done a complete evaluation of your new relationship. What is the verdict? If you have concerns this is the time for a frank talk with your potential new partner. Express your concerns candidly, lay the issues out as you see them and wait for his reaction. This could be the true litmus test of his character and a good indication of who he really is. If he minimizes your concerns, is irritated or simply dismisses the whole discussion, this spells trouble down the road. Drop him right now. On the other hand, if he addresses your concerns and/or criticisms in a mature manner and agrees to pursue solutions with you, he could be a winner. Keep him - for now at least.

Listen to Your Friends

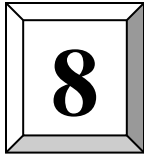
The final stage of the first month assessment involves your friends. What do your friends say about the new person in your life? What do your parents say about him? The opinions of your closest associates and family can be one of the most accurate assessments that you will ever have. These people know you and they love you. They also want you to be happy. They know who you are and can sometimes pick up on little things that you miss. Consult them often. Never hesitate to have a good old fashioned heart-to-heart talk with your friends and/or family regarding a new boyfriend or girlfriend. Undoubtedly, some people are hesitant to give you a candid opinion for fear of hurting your feelings, or because they are afraid that their assessment might be inaccurate. Tell them straight up that this will not be the case. Let them know that you are ready to hear their honest opinion and will not be offended. Also let them know that the conversation is confidential. Researchers agree that the candid assessment of close friends, and especially parents, can be one of the most accurate predictors of the success of a relationship. These people will be the last ones to ever let you down - listen to them carefully. Ken's mother warned his ex-wife not to marry him. She knew it was not going to work – Judy didn't listen.

TO DO LIST



- 1. Do the first month assessment**
- 2. Check with friends and family to get their opinion regarding the person they are seeing.**

NOTES:



THE DTR

If by now you have decided to terminate your involvement with this person, congratulations for your astuteness. However, if you have decided to keep him or her, it will soon be time for the dreaded DTR (defining the relationship) talk. Sit him down and let's get on with it. The DTR is necessary today because there are no defined milestones in the dating paradigm. Years ago there were, more or less, established rules and regulations for dating as I mentioned in the Introduction. Depending on the age of the participants, certain steps were expected at predetermined time intervals. Not anymore. Today, couples just seem to coast along. Neither one actually mentions anything specific and thus, in many cases, neither one really knows what to expect or what actions have what significance. A sort of non-verbal commitment develops with vague relationship expectations.

Don't be afraid to state precisely where you expect the relationship to be at a specific time. By each of you laying your cards on the table at this early juncture, you might prevent some ugly surprises later. Keep in mind, however, that this is not easy since human emotions are involved. Objectivity can be in short supply when two people are involved with each other. What happens if you don't share the same vision for the relationship? What happens if he terminates it? Be prepared for negative fallout. But also be prepared for the positive. If the relationship has a future, this could well be where it is defined. One way or the other, you will both

know where you stand – and that makes the negotiations worth the effort. As President Kennedy said; “Never negotiate out of fear, but never fear to negotiate.”

Let us assume for the sake of this writing, that the DTR turns out positive. You now have three months before the next evaluation. This should be a period of growth for the relationship and for the two of you personally. Hopefully you will learn much about each other and about relationships in general. Each one has its own peculiarities and all have major challenges. The twenty first century is not the easiest time to live and love but neither was the fifteenth century. At least we now have a choice of mates and can face our challenges in an atmosphere of candor. A big help at some point now would be to read one or more of the excellent relationship books that I list in the appendix under ‘Recommended Reading’.



SEX: THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

The first challenge is sex. There is no more difficult item for you to deal with, both at the beginning and during a relationship. It is also one of the most difficult topics for a writer to write about. I will share with you what I have learned through my research and from reviewing the literature and works of some of the best authors on this topic.

Time is not always a friend to civilization. In a progressive society people require from fourteen to twenty years to complete their education and a few more years to establish a career. This usually means getting married, or permanently co-habiting, in their late twenties or early thirties. Only a hundred years ago, it was customary to get married in the late teens or early twenties. Times have changed, but humans have not. Boys and girls are both physically ready for sex at about age thirteen. This is far less than ideal. The ideal situation, in terms of societal development, would seem to be sexual maturation at about the age of twenty-five, after college and during the career development stage of life. These are also the prime mating years. Also, in an ideal world, the hormonal urge to copulate would be greatly inferior to one's intellectual acuity. Often this is not the case. Many a life has been ruined by the sexual organs usurping the function of the brain. Unfettered and out of control, these organs can cause a pile of grief for their owners.

Sexual Urges

So what do we do? Here we have two people, be they in their teens or their fifties, interested in each other, trying to have a relationship and having to deal with strong sexual urges. In the clear blue light of morning, they would both tell you that they want their intellect and good judgement to govern the development of their relationship. But when they are together, they are overwhelmed by this urge to become close, to touch each other, to be naked and ultimately to copulate. This is a natural paradigm that has not changed since there first were humans. Sex is normal, natural, beneficial, life-enhancing and extremely enjoyable. So how can something this good be bad? It isn't. Sex is all good, but like many other good things in life, it has to be controlled and regulated. This is where the problem begins.

For many, if not most people, sex just happens. The couple sort of drift into it. Physical contact becomes more intense over time, from kissing and hugging to light petting, to heavy petting and then to the horizontal. Unfortunately, few couples have a conversation about sex prior to actually getting involved. Many don't even talk about it after they get involved. Yet, clear communication regarding sex is probably the most important aspect of the entire relationship. Without constant feedback, there exists great potential for serious problems from beginning to end. You can get involved too soon, at the wrong time, in the wrong manner and for the wrong reasons. Many a potentially good relationship has been destroyed, or greatly diminished, by inadequate sexual communication. Much agony could have been prevented if only the couple had been wise enough to have a frank discussion regarding the sexual direction they wished to take. Talk about sex early - talk about it often. You control sex - don't let sex control you.

Carol and Tom

What follows is an actual case history of a real love affair. It all began one day when Carol went to work at her uncle's motel and golf course for the summer between semesters at university. She was 18 and a virgin. Also working for her uncle that summer was Tom, age 20 who went to a different university. They "clicked" right off and began dating. Intense kissing led to passionate times together and it wasn't long before Carol was no longer a virgin. What followed is not untypical. Tom was a gentle lover and soon Carol really liked sex. She and Tom were like "two little

minks”. “We were at each other all the time”, Carol told me. “He couldn’t keep his hands off me and I couldn’t keep mine off him,” she said. “We made love almost every day”.

At the end of the summer there occurred two pivotal events in their relationship. Tom took Carol to meet his parents and he transferred to her university. The meeting of the parents didn’t go well. Tom’s mother, supposedly a “domineering bitch”, did not like Carol and Carol did not like her. In fact, she found Tom’s whole family “a bit weird” and “not people with whom I would be totally comfortable”. But by this time she and Tom “were in love and the sex was great”. In retrospect, Carol says that had she and Tom not been too intimately involved, she would have paid more attention to little signs that indicated how much Tom was like his family. He had the same possessive/controlling streak as his mother. Ultimately Tom had to, in some manner, control everything. But Carol was “in love” and chose to ignore the warning signs. One that should really have concerned her was Tom’s interest in other women. As the song says, he had a “wicked wandering eye”. Another red flag should have been that while the sex and the parties were “fantastic”, the rest of the relationship wasn’t. Carol and Tom did not have many discussions and the ones they had were not “very meaningful”. In fact, when it got right down to where it counted, Tom and Carol had very little in common. They explored each other’s bodies but not each other’s minds. In reality, Tom was not interested in university and academic subjects while Carol loved to learn and was a born academic. Tom quit university in third year and went to a technical school and talked Carol into doing the same. They were married the next year. Ultimately, the same issues which kept them from bonding during courtship caused them to drift apart in marriage. Carol says that “although the sex remained great, we hardly talked outside of the bedroom”. She liked to read books and write stories while Tom had no interest in books. He liked to watch TV and snowmobile. He tinkered with an antique car and played some sports. Carol loved nature and wanted to canoe. Tom only liked motor boats. After fifteen years there was “just nothing left”. Tom eventually found a girlfriend and divorced Carol leaving her with three teenagers.

Since then, Carol has finished her degree through night and summer sessions. Tom has remarried. Both are more happy but as Carol says, “we wasted some of the best years of our lives”. She is thankful for her lovely children but wishes that she had chosen a more suitable father for them. Tom “left much to be desired” she says. So does getting divorced at mid-life. No matter how amicable the terms and conditions, a divorce is almost always a disaster. And as Carol told me just recently, “it could have all been avoided if only I had listened to my intuition”. Deep down “I

had severe doubts but I chose not to address them”. As she now realizes “the warning signs were all there from the beginning”. Moral of the story – don’t let sex keep you from listening to your intuition. Great sex does not equal a great relationship.

Are You Ready?

I know that you are different. Congratulations! The mere fact that you have chosen to read this guide, and have continued to read it, proves that you wish to be different. Together may we both be found “to abide among the wise”.

The first question regarding sex - at any age - is a simple one: Are you ready? This, of course, begs the second question: How do you know when you are ready? To some extent it comes down to hormones versus intellect. Your body may want to plunge in but your mind is telling you to wait. The reverse is almost never true.

Some people say that sex is okay after so many dates, a certain amount of time or some combination of the two. Others say that you should wait until you are engaged and some recommend waiting for marriage before copulating. Still others will say that “you just know when it’s time.” All of these insights have merit, but none are likely to be the solution. The decision to introduce a full sexual component into the relationship is far too important to be treated so lightly. This could be one of the most important decisions that you will ever make.

So, before you forge ahead, let’s take a look at the decision making process. This will be a worthwhile exercise no matter what your age or sexual status. Whether you are a virgin or have had many miles of sexual activity, it is not too late to improve your chances of having a successful relationship through sexual reassessment.

The Sexual Revolution – Good or Bad?

American psychologist Sol Gordon has an interesting perspective on the modern sexual dilemma. He says that although things have changed dramatically in the past few decades, in many ways they have stayed the same. His contention is that the sexual revolution of the 60s and 70s is actually an “anti-sexual revolution” in many ways. For example: he points out that “people have sex shortly after meeting, and

then consider getting to know each other. But the possibility of a relationship is often sabotaged by the morning after”. Dr. Gordon also tells us that people often use sex as a proof of love in two ridiculous scenarios. “If you really love me, you will have sex with me” and, even more ridiculous, “since our sex together isn’t so great, we must not love each other.” How crazy can it get? As he rightfully concludes, “individuals get hurt because they don’t feel loved, not because they don’t know how to make love.” These considerations and several others must be weighed prior to having sex with your partner. Timing is important – very important.

Now, Later or Never?

The decision to have sex now or later will depend on many factors. These include your age, time in the relationship, seriousness of the relationship, level of sexual knowledge, your emotional quotient and, for some, religious and/or moral considerations. All of these elements should be assessed when making the decision to engage in sexual activity. One way to do this is to consider what others have written. Their opinions (and they are just that) can provide valuable insights. Over the next few paragraphs you will read what others have written. They have been selected from a wide range of people, including those who write from a religious perspective and those who follow a secular worldview.

What Does the Church Say?

It should be noted that all major religions prohibit sexual intercourse and other types of sexual activity before marriage. From a Judeo-Christian perspective, the Bible states that those who have premarital sex (fornication), or commit adultery will be shut out of the Kingdom of God and thus risk perishing in the great punishment. (See 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 1 Cor. 10:8-12, 2 Cor. 12:20-21, Gal. 5:19, Thess. 4:3). This could be perceived to be a bit excessive but that is what the Bible seems to imply in the referenced scripture passages. And, while many people have extricated themselves from believing in this interpretation of scripture, others still struggle with the guilt and shame brought on by religious instruction when they were young.

Malachy McCourt, a former Catholic and best-selling author, sums this up quite well.

Like most young men my age, I was terribly interested in the girls. Ninety-nine percent of teenage boys admit they think of nothing but sex - and the other 1% are liars. It's a universal phenomenon, and yet this natural human urge was made out by the Church to be sinful. Though the clergy blabbed on about the love of God and what have you, it was really all about shame and punishment. Catholicism - at least in Ireland - seemed to me obsessed with the sins of the flesh. You had to swear you would never masturbate, touch yourself, or even have an impure thought. Otherwise, you would end up burning in hell for eternity. You went to confession and did your penances, but you knew you were only postponing the inevitable. With that storm of impure thoughts raging continually in your head, what were the chances that you'd die in a state of grace? Suffused with remorse and weary of feeling ashamed and of considering myself doomed in this world and the next, I began to question what I now saw as the Church's dogma.

Mr. McCourt has overcome his rigid Catholic upbringing and arrived at a comfortable place of spiritual peace. He writes that, "for the first time, I glimpsed a difference between religion and true spirituality." Unlike Mr. McCourt, other Catholics have remained solid in their faith and continue to abide by the rules of the Church. They have allegedly given up sexual pleasure for a closer walk with God. You can decide what is best for you. It may be helpful to have a frank discussion with your pastor or priest. Parents and trusted friends can also be of benefit when faced with difficult decisions.

The Naked Truth

Lauren F. Winner, in her book *Real Sex, The Naked Truth About Chastity*, (2005) takes an interesting perspective. Ms. Winner, then a Ph.D. student at Yale University, advocates total abstinence or 'chastity' before marriage. She tells us that she was

once part of “an observant Jewish community” and had premarital sex with several men before becoming a ‘born again’ Christian. She then stopped having sex and will do nothing in private that she would not do in public. For Lauren Winner, and many other Christians, marriage is the sole domain for sexual activity of any kind.

According to Ms. Winner, the bottom line is this, “God created sex for marriage, and within a Christian moral vocabulary, it is impossible to defend sex outside of marriage. To more liberal readers, schooled on a generation of Christian ethics written in the wake of the sexual revolution, this may sound like old-fashioned hoey, but it is the simple, if sometimes difficult truth.”

The Kiss

Winner goes on to say that, “even something as simple as a kiss can have social consequences. When lips meet, things happen”. She would advise only kissing if we are prepared for the relationship to take on new meaning. “Kissing can make our bodies tingle...” She is right. Most intimate relationships begin with kissing and go from there. Ms. Winner admires, but does not adhere to, the no-kissing before marriage rule that some couples establish. She appreciates where these people are coming from because the rule establishes ‘clarity’ and ‘admits no gray area’. Winner says that “...sparkling desire and then arresting it, night after night” is not natural and is inadvisable. According to her, if you refrain from kissing you “...avoid not only temptation, but also the odd shocks, fits and starts of interrupted desire.” However, she is concerned about relationships that deny physical affection, therefore she and her boyfriend kiss - but nothing else.

While Lauren Winner has taken what some religious people would regard as the “high road,” most of her compatriots have not. Roughly 65% of all North American teenagers have sex by the time they graduate from high school. And about 75% have sex before getting married. These numbers are not appreciably different for Christians. Virgins who enroll in the Christian abstinence program *True Love Waits* allegedly prolong losing their virginity for 18 months longer than those who don’t. But they still have premarital sex eventually. Worse, the teenagers who take the abstinence vow and break it, as most do, are much less likely to use birth control. Winner sites a 2005 research project at Northern Kentucky University which showed that 61% of those who committed to sexual abstinence broke their pledges. The remaining 39% were also naughty. Fifty-five percent of them had oral sex. Those

having oral sex or getting naked and doing other sexual things, did not consider that to be having sex, however. They obviously chose the Bill Clinton defence.

What's Considered Sex?

This raises some important and somewhat difficult questions. Is oral sex really sex? And is it the same emotionally as having intercourse? The answer is probably 'yes' and 'no'. From the perspective of intimacy, the two are possibly quite similar, although some would argue that oral sex is far more intimate than having intercourse. Two people can have intercourse without the woman ever seeing the man's penis, let alone touching it. Vaginal intercourse may, however, be more conducive to the bonding process. When a woman has a man's penis inside of her and takes his sperm, there is apparently a great transference of psychological emotion. Some jokingly say that there is a nerve that runs straight from a woman's vagina to her heart. Masters and Johnson in their famous research project found that "... the post orgasmic female has a subconscious need to relate, to remain in touch with her partner." It seems that most women cannot just get dressed and walk away after having sex. Men usually can – so remember that if you don't want to get hurt. There is a strong argument that women are ultimately incapable of having 'casual sex', at least on a sustained basis. They need more. Although this is counter to the theory espoused by the so called 'sexual revolution', it may nonetheless be true.

The Cuddle Chemicals

Anthropologist Helen Fisher says sexual involvement can trigger the chemistry of romantic love by activating the "cuddle chemicals." "This is why it is dangerous to copulate with someone with whom you don't wish to become involved." She quotes the women of Western Nepal as saying, "the penis entered and love arrived." This rural expression from Nepal may well enunciate the greatest danger of sexual involvement too early in a relationship - premature bonding. Your body is totally capable of convincing your brain/heart that you are in love. According to scientists (Panksepp, 1998), different types of sexual activity "trigger the production of oxytocin and the endorphins, brain chemicals that can relax and produce feelings of

attachment. Psychologist Gordon Gallup concurs. He states that chemicals such as vasopressin and oxytocin, which are released during sexual intercourse, “encourage feelings of union with a partner”. This can easily create a false sense of bonding and leave you very vulnerable later.

David E. Comings, M.D. has expressed this very succinctly. “Oxytocin, for example, is released both in response to social stimuli and at orgasm. This is one explanation of why for most of us sex leads to romance, i.e. social as well as physical bonding. Another way to put it is that we have sex with people we like and like – and eventually love – people with whom we have sex.”

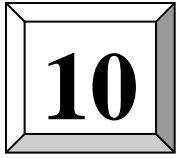
Judgement can easily be clouded under these circumstances, therefore proceed with caution. Thinking you are in love because of the false intimacy generated by sexual intercourse is not the same as being really in love with the whole person. Therefore, beware. Intercourse at the wrong time in a relationship can be very dangerous to your emotional health. As my friend Carol says, “A man’s sexual organ has an IQ of zero and a one-track mind.”

Postponing Sex – A Good Idea?

Dr. Sol Gordon, writes from a Jewish perspective. Although he does not seem rigid regarding premarital sex, he does believe that “the best way to test any relationship’s potential is to postpone having sex.” In the meantime, he advises that sexuality can be expressed by hugging, kissing, foot or body massages, long walks and holding hands. He goes on to say that, “most couples in a happy, mature relationship, will tell you that the real turn-on is intimacy, and that love and caring can, in their own ways, be more rewarding and exciting than the simple act of intercourse.” This is so true. Some of the most memorable love sessions are the ones with the most touching, the most talking and the least intercourse. The times when what happens just happens, when all the love and caring just come out naturally through conversation, cuddling, caressing and meshing together. “When you learn to feel people with your heart and not just see them with your eyes...” as Dr. Barbara DeAngelis writes. Intimacy wins hands down over plain sex and should be the goal of every relationship.

When it comes to making the final decision of whether or not to have sex, I am going to combine the insights of several authors and also my own. Shattered lives and single parenthood are too great a price to pay for misdirected sexual energy.

Having sex too soon, or under the wrong circumstances, is probably the biggest mistake you can make if you are looking for a long-term relationship. As mentioned previously, sex has the power to dramatically alter how two people relate to each other. It can make you think that you are in love at the deepest level only to find out years later that it was nothing more than hormonal illusion. But . . . if a genuine emotional and intellectual bond has been allowed to develop, (the main reason for waiting), then sex can play an integral part in forming the cement that will hold the relationship together forever. Bottom line - if you want a happy long-term relationship, be very careful how, and when, you decide to have sex. **Never** just let it happen. Plan it out as if it were the biggest event of your life. It just might be.



TO WAIT OR NOT TO WAIT: 7 THINGS TO CONSIDER

Planning is about communication and integrity. It is about considering all of the ramifications and possible outcomes. Deciding to have sex is no different. Just like other major decisions there is a process that should be followed.

7 Things To Consider:

1. Do you trust each other implicitly in all aspects of life? That trust includes no pressure to have sex.
2. Have you spent enough time being intellectually and emotionally intimate? In other words do you know each other well enough to discuss any topic openly?
3. Do you sincerely respect each other's values?
4. Have you been through a crisis or difficult time together, (illness, job loss or family crisis)? You need to know how your partner conducts him/herself under stress or panic and especially how he or she treats you and others in this situation.

5. Are you both prepared for the consequences of having sex? The relationship will probably not be the same afterward. It could be better or it might dissolve. What if, by some fluke, you get pregnant? Are you prepared to have his child? Get an abortion? (This happened to a wonderful friend of mine. The condom broke and she got pregnant the first time she had intercourse).
6. Do you fully understand each other's attitudes toward sex and your own sexual and emotional needs? Are you only having sex out of curiosity or to lose your virginity (a totally stupid idea) or do you actually want to unite your body with this person's body in the most intimate way possible? Whatever the case, make sure you are both on the same page in this regard.
7. Are you both prepared to be responsible for safe sex and birth control? These topics need to be discussed in the most candid manner possible, keeping in mind that condoms DO NOT protect you against the diseases you have a high risk of contracting – diseases like herpes and genital warts (HPV). If you are not both virgins, a discussion of past sexual history is highly recommended.

Young Wisdom

My friend Richard, age 32 and very astute, says that what is lost today is “the joy of delayed gratification and the benefits of waiting for the right circumstances”. He goes on to say that, “The ability to be still has been lost to my generation. We want instant gratification in everything – including relationships.” This very brilliant young man, who is the age of my youngest daughter, went on to say during our conversation that “people my age have lost the thrill of anticipation.” I assured him that his parents' generation were the biggest contributors to the demise of this simple pleasure. We wanted everything at once and passed this same characteristic on to our children. The “do it now, why wait?” approach began in the 60s with the baby boomers. There is much to be gained by waiting when it comes to relationships; unfortunately I learned this the hard way. There is a right time for everything in life. “Wisdom is knowing when to do what.”

This is what I hope to impart to you with this mini-guide; the wisdom of knowing what to do and when. Refer to this mini-guide often as if it were a close friend. Your happiness is foremost in my mind as I write. I want you, and all others in your situation, to make the right choices for your life. Choosing a mate with whom you can form a long-term relationship is, for many people, central to their happiness. Life is more complete when you are with the right person. My grandparents were happily married and in love for 58 years and they could have been a great role model if I had paid more attention. That is why I am taking so much time to explain in detail what many believe is the minimum required knowledge regarding mate selection. Some will say, “Jim, give me a break. If I went through this whole process, I would never have sex.” Wrong! You will have sex and you will have it at the right time, with the right person and for the right reasons. The wait and the assessment effort will be worth it. As my friend Kenny says, “Just ask my ex-wife.”

For Girls Only: Raising the Bar

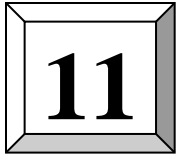
Women would do well to listen to Steve Harvey. In his new book which was featured on Oprah, *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man: What Men Really Think About Love, Relationships, Intimacy, and Commitment*” (Harper Collins 2009) he gives some sage advice. He begins by saying that men are very simple. That is an astute observation that many women overlook. This is especially true when it comes to sex in the context of a relationship. He makes a very cogent argument for waiting at least 90 days. When asked by Zosia Bielski of the Globe and Mail if he thought that was realistic in this day and age, here is his answer.

I think it’s absolutely realistic. That’s the problem: Women have given up their standards and their requirements because of us. We have made you think that if you don’t put out in a certain amount of time, you’re going to drive us off. The real deal of it is, there’s nothing you can do to beat a guy off that really wants you. If your wall is a foot and a half high, you’re going to have a lot of guys playing in your yard, digging up your grass, and messing up your flowerbed. If you’ve got your bar set high, that’s what we’re going to rise to.

Mr. Harvey advises women to be a ‘keeper’ and not a ‘sport fish’. A keeper is a woman who commands respect, whereas a sport fish is “a girl with no rules who operates day to day” and is “low maintenance”. They demand little and thus get little. The keeper knows her value and keeps her standards high. She holds off on sex until the man meets those high standards. Never does the keeper lower the bar. He either measures up or he doesn’t get in. Ever.

The Final Decision

Whether or not you choose to have sex now or wait, the choice is yours - and yours alone. If you have, in the absence of all pressure, and after considering all of the ramifications, decided to have sex then do it with a clear conscience. If, on the other hand, you have chosen to abstain at this time, you can be sure that your decision will have its own rewards. It is your body, your life and your future. Why do something now that you will regret later? The myth about needing to lose your virginity to “belong” or “be a woman/or a man” is just that - a myth. Another similar myth is the one about needing “experience” before getting married. Believe me, it will make absolutely no difference if you love the person that you are marrying. There are arguments for both schools of thought, but the only one that counts is how you feel about it. Don’t be pressured, either by a partner or society, into doing something for which you are not ready. You are very capable of knowing when the time is right, the conditions are right and when you are with the right person. Let your own intuition be your guide. Don’t be swayed by the opinion of your peers. Stand your ground and do what is right for you - Always.



HOT CHEMISTRY & REAL LOVE

How do you know if you are really in love? But before we go down this road, I want to stop for a moment and dispel the myth of the 'soul mate'. This term came into vogue a few years ago to describe a person (usually the only person) to whom you can be truly united. Your souls belong together and were destined to be so from birth or from the foundation of the world. While a lofty and mystical idea, it is nonetheless horse manure. The idea that there is just one special person for you is ridiculous. There are many. Imagine if this wasn't true, how difficult mating would be. Maybe you live in New York and your 'soul mate' lives in Paris. This does not mean to infer that there are not some people more suitable for you than others. There are certain people and certain types of people with whom you will form a much better union than others. As per our preceding discussions, there are people with whom you have much more in common and to whom you are far more attracted than others. But a certain 'someone' is just not true. Never worry that you were "supposed to be with someone else" if you are happy with your current partner. Finding a 'perfect' partner in an imperfect world is not a goal to which you should aspire. Love - true love - is a worthy goal. Every human has a desire to love and be loved. This is one of the main reasons that choosing the wrong mate is so tragic. When the relationship fails, or deteriorates, one or both are deprived of love. And to be deprived of love is one of the most painful human experiences. But what is love? Millions have experienced it,

thousands have written about it, and yet few can actually describe it. Maybe love can best be described by what it isn't.

The Right Love

True love is not self-centered. Quite the opposite. Love is an affection centred on another person. The essence of love is putting that person's welfare and security ahead of your own. It is about asking what is best for your partner in any given situation and determining what you can do to increase her happiness. How can you contribute toward his personal growth? Herbert Fensterheim, Ph.D. and Jean Baer say it well.

In the ideal close relationship, you establish a communion with another human being where feelings come first and you cannot separate giving and taking. In the optimal close relationship, the other person is like part of yourself. In fulfilling the other person's needs as if they were your own, you satisfy your own needs. Yet you remain yourself as an individual. Thus both (people) are led to deeper, richer experiences and in the merging the individuality of each becomes stronger.

This is one of the best descriptions of mature love played out in a relationship that I found in my research. Real love simply cannot be selfish or controlling. It will allow you to state your own needs and to understand those of your partner. Without this unselfish love a close relationship is not possible.

Time is Your Friend

Love is more than a 'feeling' or a set of emotional supports. As Erich Fromm says in his charming little book, *The Art of Loving*, "To love somebody is not just a strong

feeling - it is a decision, it is a judgement, it is a promise.” Entering into a serious long-term relationship is very sobering for those with maturity and insight. That is why I am putting so much effort into preparing you to make your mate selection wisely. Based not just on the euphoric feeling that everyone has in a new relationship, but on that solid ‘knowing’ that comes with time - the time it takes to really get acquainted with all aspects of a potential mate. Just like with the stock market, time is your friend when it comes to mate selection. You simply cannot short circuit the process. Many have tried. Most have failed.

Boys will be Boys

Love is not sex and sex is not love. I touched on this theme back a few pages, but here I want to expand on it. The urge to have sex early in a relationship can be overwhelming if the hormones are high and the chemistry is hot. This is a natural characteristic of human development and the mating paradigm. The urge to copulate early, especially for boys and men, is paramount. Anthropologists claim, and history affirms that for a male, sex is the number one element of attraction to a female. Physical/sexual attraction almost always sets the stage for further developments. Men are attracted to women primarily for their bodies and their beauty. Sorry, but it’s true. Not that men are incapable of intimacy – they are - but sexual chemistry greatly restricts the breadth of their vision. This has become increasingly true as our civilization has progressed. Not long ago, in terms of human history, it was the norm to marry at 14 and die at 40, with little else but a struggle to stay alive in between. Now it’s different. Men’s sexual nature can often be a real nuisance getting in the way of a happy life and successful career.

According to Dr. Bob

Dr. Bob Berkowitz, the Men’s Correspondent on NBC’s *TODAY* Show and author of *What Men Won’t Tell You But Women Need To Know*, discusses the topic of men and sex about as well as anyone. Dr. Berkowitz recognizes that “... most men have the capacity and the desire to be lovers in the best sense of the word.” “... AND ... men are not immune to the emotional power that is generated by sexual intimacy. Their

priorities, however - lust first, love later - can't be overlooked." He advises women that ". . . he has his agenda and you have your agenda. Stick to your agenda. If you want to know more about him . . . before becoming sexually intimate - then make that clear to him and don't back down. He will do it your way if he is really interested in you." Well said, Bob.

But it doesn't quite end there. Unless you and your partner have a clear understanding that there will be no sex, nature will intervene. This is especially true if one or both of you have previous experience. To quote Dr. Bob again, "The male need for sexual fulfillment is an integral aspect of an intimate relationship. It cannot be postponed indefinitely without a celibacy vow and NO physical contact. Men are designed to get sexually aroused very easily. Closeness and kissing can ignite a fire that is not easily extinguished - especially if there is strong chemistry." Love can very quickly take a back seat to sex. Bottom line: When the chemistry is strong, the will is weak. Merle Shain writes that, "Sex is magical; it plays tricks on us. Few things have such power to distort reality."

What is Love Anyway?

When it comes to understanding love, the manipulative power of sex can never be far from the center of the discussion. Many people are in bad relationships today because they allowed sex to trick them into thinking they were in love. Young people are especially susceptible to the bewitching power of sex. The younger and more inexperienced we are the more likely we are to be fooled.

So, what is a person to do? How, in this mess of hormones, mating agendas and cultural conditioning, can we ever know if we are actually in love? There are two tried and proven methods. One is to understand the parameters of love and the other is to listen to your intuition. Let's start with a look at the parameters of love. We have discussed what love is not, now let's take a look at what love is - or is supposed to be.

Since love is supposedly at the heart of most religions, let's begin here. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Christians all claim that love has certain unique qualities that distinguish it from all other human emotions. But love is very difficult to define satisfactorily. Even those who are trained professionally in the social sciences are usually unable to define love. They often evade the issue by asking, "What do *you*

think love is?” This was not the approach taken by Saint Paul in the Bible. He lays out his definition of perfect love in a straightforward manner.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

This definition of love is the most common one used in North America and is read at many weddings. It is also quite universal and therefore its almost exact equivalent is found in the other religions previously mentioned.

Get Real

But is it realistic? Somewhat, maybe. Have you ever met anyone who can love like that? Neither have I. Unless two people were true saints, it would be impossible to practice a love like Paul describes, in a relationship in the real world, all of the time. One might use Paul’s definition as a benchmark so long as they realize they will never achieve this level of perfection. Perfect love is for perfect people and they are in very short supply where I come from.

There is, according to some commentators, a much more wholesome way to approach the task of defining love. One could begin with a practical definition put forth by psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan: “When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as is one’s own satisfaction or security, then the state of love exists.” Unfortunately, as William J. Lederer and Don D. Jackson point out, if this type of love arrives, it will be “the result of luck or of years of hard work and patience.” While Sullivan’s definition of love has merit, it is devoid of the mystical element that we have been led to believe necessary. I quote the good doctor here because I remember studying his work when I was in graduate school and recognize the value of realistic pragmatism when it comes to defining such an elusive topic.

Deep and Profound

Another great professor that I remember from my studies at university is Erich Fromm, whom I mentioned earlier. Dr. Fromm has a deep and profound understanding of love. One of his greatest contributions to this field is that one must choose to love. “To love somebody is not just a strong feeling - it is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise.” (Quoted again because it is so important). He recognizes that feelings come and go, so love must be based on concrete things like “*will*” and “*judgment*” and “*promise*.” The full knowledge of love, according to Dr. Fromm, lies in the act of love itself. He tells us that “this act transcends thought, it transcends words. It is the daring plunge into the experience of union.” Before doing this however, he cautions that one must know the other person and one’s self objectively. This is necessary in order to see reality and to “overcome the illusions” and the “irrationally distorted picture” that we get when we are in the grips of romantic love.

Diane Ackerman makes the point that love is one of the most confusing and imprecise words in the English language. “We use the word love in such a sloppy way that it can mean almost nothing or absolutely everything.” For example, “I love him” and “I love the way he smiles” are two different meanings using the same word. No wonder that we have a problem.

Love in Action

Love, according to Merle Shain is both difficult to define and difficult to learn. She writes that, “loving isn’t easy and many never get the hang of it.” Too many people, whether because of sloth or neglect, settle for mediocrity when fantastic is possible. Many seem not to realize the tremendous benefits of spending some time learning to love. This tragedy is witnessed every day in the high number of stale relationships, breakups, divorces and dysfunctional families. **Time spent learning how to love now will pay huge dividends later.**

Merle Shain’s understanding of the parameters of love is so excellent that I am going to borrow the following quotes from her best seller, *Some Men Are More Perfect Than Others - a book about men, and hence about women, and love and dreams*. This is an old book that will never go out of style because it is filled with

cogent insights and timeless truths. I hope that at least some of you will find a copy of this magnificent little book (128 pages) and read every page.

- Loving someone means helping them to be more themselves, which can be different from being what you'd like them to be, although often they turn out the same.
- So men who are loving, like as much as they love, and somehow they find the courage to let their partners grow in the direction they need to grow, even if that contains the risk that they might grow away. Good people can't be possessed and those who can, one never wants for long.
- Those who attempt to find security by eliminating inconsistencies eliminate the miraculous with the same deft hand. There is no security in a relationship that tries to hold onto what was, nor is there security in the one that dreads what might be.
- Good (relationships) seem to function something like a buddy system, the people in them swim in their own waters but keep a protective eye on each other, and should the whistle blow, turn up quickly to hold each other's hand. (I like this definition).

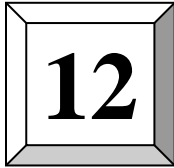
Love - A Blending

What I have learned from reading every book in the bibliography is that although love will always defy exact definition, Merle Shain understands it well. Sol Gordon and Erich Fromm are in this same category. I will let Prof. Fromm end this discussion of love with an elegant summary that he gleaned from the great Jewish philosopher Benedict De Spinoza.

- Thus Spinoza arrives at the statement that virtue and power are one and the same. Envy, jealousy, ambition, any kind of greed are passions; love is an action, the practice of a human power, which can be practiced only in freedom and never as the result of a compulsion.

- Love is an activity, not a passive affect; it is a “standing in” not a “falling for”. In the most general way, the active character of love can be described by stating that love is primarily giving, not receiving.

At the end of the rainbow love is about making someone a part of you and you becoming a part of them. Please remember this when doing your relationship assessments.



THE THREE MONTH ASSESSMENT

Love, Intimacy or Friendship?

The next major milestone in the relationship is the all important three month assessment. This is where you decide if the relationship is worth pursuing. By now you have spent, (or should have spent) plenty of time together. You have met each other's family, maybe have done a few things with siblings and generally know quite a bit about each other's background. You know each other's intentions and have a reasonable sense of where the relationship is going. While still too early to determine for sure if this is mature love or just a great time, certain insights are available by asking yourself the right questions and recording the answers on paper.

Questions To Ask Yourself

1. Is there still a good level of compatibility and congruency? This is best calculated by how well you do things together. Is there friction? Do you argue?
2. Are your interests still similar? Basically do you have enough in common? One method of drawing a conclusion here is to measure your likes and dislikes. Are there enough differences to potentially cause a problem?
3. Does the person measure up to your expectations? **This is important.** Has your admiration for this person increased or decreased over the past three

months? A decrease can spell big trouble. Determine what has happened and if it can be fixed. Don't just settle.

4. In terms of behaviour, are things consistent with your earlier assessments? Does he still treat you the same or better? This too can be a bellwether. Deteriorating behaviour could be a harbinger of worse things to come.
5. What about the three big Cs: Chemistry, Conversation and Communication? Are you still as physically attracted to this person? If not, what has changed? Can the two of you have a good conversation, one that is enjoyable, relaxing and invigorating? You should really enjoy talking with your potential mate – someday you may be spending a lot of time together. And then there is communication. This includes conversation but more than talking. Effective communication involves the intimate sharing of information and the transmission of feelings and ideas. Poor communication is a major cause of relationship breakdown.
6. Can you enjoy silence together? Noise, be it music, TV or conversation, can mask flaws in a relationship. Quiet time together is important. An evening reading together from time to time could be beneficial in measuring the long-term potential of a relationship. If one is a voracious reader and the other is not, there could be problems. What a person reads tells a great deal about who they are. So do their heroes Winston Churchill once said, "To understand a man first find out who his heroes are". Best to pay attention.
7. Last, but as they say, not least, are fun and humour. Are you having fun? Fun and laughter will carry you a lot further than sex or money. People that have fun together are far more likely to survive the eventual trials of life. Excitement is also important. You should have a certain amount of excitement from being with this person. Social scientists say that excitement builds love and sustains love. Therefore, it is important to have a certain level of excitement in every stage of life.

Be sure to record your **doubts**. Doubts are normal, (humans are naturally doubters) however, if they persist they may be telling you something. Usually negative thoughts are temporary and not serious. Just monitor them for a while. Because this three month assessment is so critical to your future happiness, I have made allowances for the fact that you may not have the time to answer these questions, by providing a quick check list in the appendix. Performing this little exercise will indicate if there are any warning flags you should be aware of.

It's in His Kiss

As a final consideration, before you decide to continue or to bail; how affirmative is the kissing and cuddling? Weird as this may sound, you can tell a great deal by the way a person kisses you - especially a man. Men are known to copulate with just about any female who makes herself available, but kissing and cuddling is different. Notice how much, and in what manner, a man shows affection in non-sexual situations. Passionate kissing and petting go along with sex and might be nothing more than hormonal passion. Pay close attention to his kisses and his affections when he is not aroused. Note if he holds your hand and puts his arms around you. These can be clear indications that a man is interested in more than just sex. Genuine affection cannot be manufactured. Sexual arousal is different. For most men that switch is never turned off. Quickly discount what a man says during sex or when he wants it. Always - and I mean always - do your affection assessment in the non-sexual times. Times like when you are out for a walk, at the movies or just hanging out. An arm around you and a little kiss on the cheek while watching a sunset is far more important than an "I love you" in a moment of passion.

Now you have completed the critical three month assessment. Congratulations. For our purposes we are going to assume that buddy made the grade and you are keeping him; for now. But remember **that he is still on probation.**

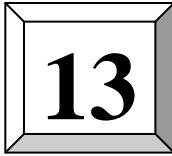
The period between the three month assessment and the next one at six months will have to settle some serious issues. We have covered sex and whether you waited the suggested three months, or not, is now history. Either you did or you didn't. If you have decided to wait until later or until marriage, that is fine. Should you have waited for three months, but plan to start now, please read that section again. You can never know too much about sex. The bigger issues now, however, are regarding love, shared vision, connectedness and the future together.

TO DO LIST



Write the answers to the seven questions of the Assessment

NOTES:



THE SIX MONTH ASSESSMENT AND LONG-TERM POTENTIAL

At six months it is time, as fishermen say, to either “fish or cut bait”. Unless you are sure that the relationship is going somewhere, you can’t afford to waste another minute. You are either young and in your best mating years or older and don’t have that many years left. I hate to talk like this but the truth is the truth. To invest more than six months in a tentative relationship - at any stage of life - is plain foolishness.

To determine if the relationship has lifelong potential is not terribly difficult. For starters, you will both be talking about a future together. Depending on your age, this could mean remaining a couple at university, a future marriage and/or cohabitation. You will have had a very candid discussion regarding all aspects of finances. This can be difficult for some couples, but it is absolutely necessary. Don’t, whatever you do, skip this essential topic. Failing to adequately assess your level of congruency here could torpedo your relationship later. Savers and spendthrifts usually don’t mix.

This also applies to your thoughts regarding children. Do you both want children? If so, how many? Again, don’t skip this topic. It is essential that you both have the same opinion regarding the ‘patter of little feet’. Ken and Judy, after about a very short discussion, agreed that neither of them wanted children. But . . . after they were married for three years, Ken changed his mind; he now wanted children and then convinced Judy to start a family. His plan did not work well. After Judy had the children, she regarded them as her ‘property’ and shut poor Ken out of their lives.

Through various subtle means she separated Ken from the children. And although they have been divorced for several years, Ken still grieves for the children he loved so much but was unable to enjoy. Be sure not to repeat this heart breaking story.

Love and Liberty

Agreement regarding education and career plans is also very important. You must agree with and respect each other's plans in this important area. Furthermore, you must be prepared to support and promote each other's choices. This is the only way that together you can both be your best. Liberty is the essence of love. Without the freedom to be yourself, you are better off alone. A man that loves a woman will respect all aspects of her life and above all, will allow her to have her own voice. Her opinion will rank equally with his, and her happiness will be his primary concern. This is not just wishful thinking, nor is it setting the bar too high. Being respected is a basic human right and is paramount to a healthy and happy future. If this right is not being met, end the relationship or you will inherit a lifetime of grief.

Kathy and Brad

Take my friend Kathy for instance. She married Brad even though she knew he was "a bit controlling" and "put her down" sometimes. Not long into the marriage she found that Brad was "very controlling" and did "not value" her opinion very highly on anything. Over the years he got worse, progressively more disrespectful and verbally abusive. Finally, three children and fifteen years later, she divorced him. Kathy now lives alone, (but has a boyfriend) and is struggling to raise the children by herself. Brad has been very little help, especially since he has remarried. Bottom line - don't let this happen to you.

Equality and Other Essentials

If you decide to continue the relationship after six months, make certain, as much as this is possible, that you will always be his equal. Let him know that you expect to have time by yourself and time with your friends. A woman (and a man) needs to go away with friends periodically and also have her/his own space. This makes time together even better. Unfortunately too many people fail to realize this and end up smothering each other. Insist on liberty and equality in every area of life.

Because you could ultimately be spending a lot of time with this person, there are also other important considerations. You better be certain that your potential life partner does not suffer from dramatic mood swings. This condition could greatly diminish the relationship and make your life very unsatisfactory. Again, just ask Kathy. “Brad hid this quite well when we were going together, but later it became intolerable. There were signs but I was in love and just put them out of mind.” Big mistake. Pay very close attention to mood swings or changes in behaviour. A person who suddenly becomes very angry, nasty, (especially when drinking) or overly melancholy, is not someone with whom you want to spend the rest of your life. In most cases the more consistent the temperament the easier the person will be to live with. Stable, dependable and predictable may sound boring now, but later they will be the characteristics that will make for a good mate. This is especially true if the person also has a good sense of humour and is fun to be around.

The First Disagreement

By now you have had at least one disagreement and there will probably be others - make that, there WILL be others. How you disagree could be another bellwether on the relationship. Honestly, how does he react? Stop right there before you answer. This is no time for “oh, he hollers at me but he’s nice later,” or, “she bitches me out but then takes me to bed,” or “he goes off by himself for a while and we never really settle anything,” or, “she sulks for a while and then she is okay.” Not on your life! When you have disagreements, they must end with a negotiated settlement and with full respect intact. Now, the settlement might just mean an agreement to take no

further action or to agree to disagree. All couples have these areas. I always liked the line in Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore*, "they did nothing in particular but they did it very well." Doing nothing and being friends beats winning arguments at the other's expense any day.

Can you truly discuss any aspect of your relationship or any other topic? Again, honesty is required. Is the level of communication in the relationship satisfactory to you? Do you feel comfortable about bringing up an issue for discussion - including those of an intimate nature? **The level of your happiness in the future will be directly proportional to how well you communicate with each other.** Being able to fully express yourself on any issue is essential to a good relationship. In this regard, your partner should definitely be your best friend.

Bonding

You have to love a person at the very center of their being (essence) if you plan to bond with them. A long term, happy relationship requires that there is a melding of who you are with who the other person is. At this point physical attributes and sexuality become secondary. Two people become one in a mystical way that defies description much like words cannot adequately describe the beauty of a sunset. You have to see it and feel it. Bonding is absolutely essential to a long term relationship and it requires time; the time necessary to get to know a potential partner at a very deep level. Shortcuts can turn into painful long cuts if you try to circumvent the process.

This is what happened to Ken and Judy who I mentioned in Chapter 4. They did not date long enough or experience enough situations together to know each other. Thus they did not bond. There was always a deep-rooted dissonance at a deep level even though they admired and appreciated many things about each other. These were not enough to overcome their bonding deficit because at heart Ken and Judy were two very different people.

When couples fail to bond during the dating period of the relationship they set themselves up for some real difficulties later. The brutal choice in a failed relationship is to either stay together alone or gamble on finding a more suitable mate. The latter is usually preferable. In either case there will be one or two broken hearts. Sometimes the inevitable break is dragged out over many years where it becomes

more or less a constant agony. Both know the relationship is not working but neither has what it takes to address the real issue(s) - they just suffer alone in a loveless silence. This is often true even if they have an adequate sex life. But “the heart is a lonely hunter” and invariably one or both partners will meet someone else. This brings an end to what is already broken. Dr. Sol Gordon writes that, “I never list adultery as a cause of marital failure. Adultery is a symptom of a relationship that has already failed.” A failure to bond will almost always end in heartache.

Whether the relationship delaminates over many years or ends abruptly, both scenarios are terrible and result in tons of emotional pain, usually for both partners. This is especially true if children are involved. When breakups occur a lot of family history is destroyed. The moral of the story – if you don’t bond you eventually break.

Trust Your Intuition

Now, for the final two questions.

- 1. Is this a person with whom you would want to have children and...**
- 2. Can you see yourself growing old with this person?**

Please don’t answer yet. Close your eyes, relax and go to your favourite place either in your mind or physically. Sit down and look deep into your heart. Now ask the two questions and listen. Out of the depths will come an honest answer. Your intuition has been waiting to hear from you and is happy to have been contacted. Listen to what your internal voice has to say – and remember, it will never lie to you. Deep in your heart you know the answer. The decision about what you are going to do rests with you.

Either you proceed and build a solid, long-lasting relationship, or you are, as tactfully as possible, going to terminate the relationship. In either case, may the blessings of the gods be with you.

NOTES:

CONCLUSION

In closing, I want to thank you for staying with me through this somewhat laborious monologue. Although the subject matter is quite difficult, I strongly believe it is the least you need to know about mate selection. In fact, I would be delighted if you read this mini-guide often, and make it your friend for years to come. I would also be pleased if you read some of the books cited in the Recommended Reading list.

Mating is something about which you can never know too much. Learning to love is a life-long process where the journey is more important than the destination. A solid committed relationship should be the primary objective of any human being seeking a life partner. It will give me great pleasure to know that in some small way I may have contributed to your future happiness.

This mini-guide grew out of my own difficult experiences, numerous interviews and hundreds of hours of research. My objective is to help people by sharing my insights and those of others with whom I have been associated. I hope that I have helped you to learn the art of choosing the right mate so that you will not have to suffer through the pain of a dysfunctional relationship. Should you succeed in choosing the right mate and building a long-term, happy relationship, I will have accomplished my objective.

Jim Cogle

RECOMMENDED READING

Act Like a Lady – Think Like a Man – Steve Harvey

Why Men Love Bitches – Sherry Argou

What Men Won't Tell You But Women Need to Know – Bob Berkowitz

Are You the One For Me? – Barbara DeAngelis

The Art of Loving – Helen Fisher

How Can You Tell If You're Really In Love – Sol Gordon

Get Smart with Your Heart – Suzanne Lopez

Some Men Are More Perfect Than Others – Merle Shain

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

First Month Assessment

1. Do I like this person more? 5 4 3 2 1 (1 = less)
2. Deepening physical connection? 5 4 3 2 1
3. Is there a growing intellectual attachment? 5 4 3 2 1
4. Is there a sense of equality? 5 4 3 2 1
5. Have you many common interests? 5 4 3 2 1
6. Is there an indication of shared values? 5 4 3 2 1
7. Do you have any inexplicable concerns? 5 4 3 2 1
8. Is your intuition giving you a 'green light'? 5 4 3 2 1

Three Month Assessment

1. Do you have a high level of compatibility? 5 4 3 2 1 (1 = less)
2. Are there enough shared interests? 5 4 3 2 1
3. Does this person measure up to your expectations? 5 4 3 2 1
4. Is his/her behaviour consistent with earlier assessments? 5 4 3 2 1
5. Has the 'chemistry' increased or decreased? 5 4 3 2 1
6. Are the conversations becoming more meaningful? 5 4 3 2 1
7. Does the level of communication warrant your approval? 5 4 3 2 1
8. Is your quiet time together something to which you look forward? 5 4 3 2 1
9. Do his heroes inspire you? 5 4 3 2 1
10. Is there enough fun and excitement in the relationship? 5 4 3 2 1

Note: Unless you are completely candid, this little exercise will be useless

Six Month Assessment

1. Has the level of compatibility increased? 5 4 3 2 1 (1 = less)
2. Are there still enough shared interests? 5 4 3 2 1
3. Is his/her behaviour still acceptable? 5 4 3 2 1
4. Are your values definitely similar? 5 4 3 2 1
5. Is there still that excitement of attraction? 5 4 3 2 1
6. Is the level of communication of sufficient quality to last a long time? 5 4 3 2 1
7. Are your times together better then they were three months ago? 5 4 3 2 1
8. Is the fun and excitement still there? 5 4 3 2 1
9. Do you enjoy being with this person in all situations? 5 4 3 2 1
10. Have you discussed a future together? 5 4 3 2 1
11. Can you identify with his family and he with yours? 5 4 3 2 1
12. To what extent do you like his/her friends? 5 4 3 2 1

13. Are your future career plans congruent? 5 4 3 2 1

14. Are you his/her equal in all aspects of the relationship? 5 4 3 2 1

15. Has your intuition given you a clear 'green light'? 5 4 3 2 1

(If there are still a few little concerns, list them for future reference)

APPENDIX B

How to Use the Tests

For Tests A and B lay the two partners' answer sheets for a particular page one on top of the other so that the columns of X's are side by side. Be sure that the tops of the two sheets are even.

The alternative answers for each question have been arranged in order of increasing differentness (vertically). Therefore, the extent of the vertical distance between the X's for any particular question indicates the degree of difference in cultural and ethnic values between the two people taking the tests.

A scanning of the results of Test C will make the difference in taste between the two people obvious. In *general*, the greater the gap between the two people in culture and taste, the greater the likelihood that they will find themselves incompatible and the greater will be their difficulty in forming a highly functional relationship. The reasons for this have been discussed earlier. This is the rule of thumb, but it is not an absolute law. No generalization about human nature can be absolute, for there are an infinite variety of people, and they relate to each other in an infinite number of different ways. Therefore, you and your potential mate should do more than just take note of the differences between the two of you. You should explore them in depth so that you can determine if the "sameness" can be fully utilized to increase the solidarity of the relationship, and so that you can attempt to turn some of the possibly debilitating differences into advantages, or at least to neutralize them.

One way of achieving these aims is to undertake a *quid pro* (give and take) session, using the information brought out in these tests as the basic material for discussion. Such a session will provide the two of you with a means of beginning, at least, to resolve and adjust differences. But be aware that no matter how hard you attempt to be objective, you will have a strong tendency to rationalize because of your emotional/romantic connection.

A good friend can be invaluable in helping you to be objective, whether you see the friend alone or together. It is absolutely essential that differences be adequately, and amicably resolved. If this is not possible then terminate the relationship and move on with your life. Hopefully you will have had a good time together and can regard your time together as a learning experience.

INTERPERSONAL COMPARISON TESTS

TEST A

1. *I was born*

- a) in the Atlantic Provinces/New England States _____
- b) in Ontario/Greater New York _____
- c) in Quebec/Eastern Seaboard _____
- d) in the Prairie Provinces/the Mid West _____
- e) in British Columbia/West Coast _____
- f) outside Canada/Outside the United States _____

2. *My place of rearing was*

- a) a large city _____
- b) suburbs _____
- c) a medium-sized town _____
- d) a small town _____
- e) a rural area _____

3. *My religious background is*

- a) Catholic _____
- b) Jewish _____
- c) Protestant _____
- d) Moslem _____
- e) None _____
- f) other _____

4. *My parents are*

- a) first-generation Canadians/Americans _____
- b) second-generation Canadians/Americans _____
- c) third-generation Canadians/Americans _____
- d) not Canadian/American citizens _____

5. *The highest annual income earned by my parents was*

- a) \$150,000+ _____
- b) \$100,000+ _____
- c) \$70,000+ _____
- d) \$50,000+ _____
- e) \$40,000+ _____
- f) \$30,000+ _____

6. *The highest educational level reached by my father was*

- a) elementary/junior high school _____
- b) high school _____
- c) college _____
- d) graduate school _____
- e) a masters/doctoral degree _____

7. *The highest education level reached by mother was*

- a) elementary/junior high school _____
- b) high school _____
- c) college _____
- d) graduate school _____
- e) a masters/doctoral degree _____

8. *My position in the family was*

- a) oldest child _____
- b) middle child _____
- c) youngest child _____
- d) only child _____
- e) one of several in middle _____

9. *The number of children in my family was*

- a) seven or more _____
- b) five or six _____
- c) three or four _____
- d) two _____
- e) only one _____

10. *My parents were*

- a) very close in age _____
- b) less than five years apart _____
- c) less than ten years apart _____
- d) less than fifteen years apart _____
- e) fifteen or more years apart _____

11. My parents' experience with divorce was that

- a) neither was ever divorced _____
- b) one had been previously divorced _____
- c) both had been previously divorced _____
- d) they were divorced when I was a child (12 or under) _____
- e) they were divorced when I was in my teens or older _____

12. In my parents' families (including grandparents and parents' siblings)

- a) there have been no divorces _____
- b) there has been one divorce _____
- c) there have been two divorces _____
- d) there have been three or more divorces _____

13. In my family the person who seemed in charge of rearing was

- a) my mother _____
- b) my father _____
- c) neither parent _____
- d) I never thought about who was in charge _____

14. In our community my parents were

- a) considered important people _____
- b) included among the people of some standing _____
- c) just average socially _____
- d) below average socially _____
- e) considered outsiders _____

INTERPERSONAL COMPARISON TESTS

TEST B

I. PAST LIFE EXPERIENCES

1. *My family situation consisted of*

- a) living with both of my biological parents _____
- b) living with just my mother _____
- c) living with just my father _____
- d) living in foster homes or with stepparents _____
- e) living with my real mother and a stepfather _____
- f) living with my real father and a stepmother _____

2. *My own family experience was*

- a) .warm and pleasant _____
- b) .pleasant but not intimate _____
- c) .nothing I can particularly remember _____
- d) .unpleasant _____

3. *As clearly as I can remember my earliest days were*

- a) extremely pleasant _____
- b) neither pleasant nor unpleasant _____
- c) pleasant, though I was nervous _____
- d) unpleasant _____

4. *The most pleasant aspects of my childhood are associated with experiences*

- a) with both parents _____
- b) with the parent of the same sex _____
- c) with the parent of the opposite sex _____
- d) with my siblings _____
- e) unconnected with members of my immediate family _____
- f) I do not recall any particularly pleasant experiences _____

5. *As a child I was fond of*

- a) reading, solitary hobbies, and daydreaming _____
- b) sports and outdoor activities _____
- c) being around other people socially as much as possible _____
- d) no particular interests which I can recall _____

6. During my growing-up period

- a) I had many close friends _____
- b) I had one or two close friends _____
- c) I had no friends whom I particularly recollect _____
- d) I was a very solitary person _____

7. In my family, my dating

- a) was something I could easily discuss with my parents _____
- b) was mentioned rarely, or only in a kidding manner _____
- c) was something I did not care to discuss _____
- d) aroused considerable conflict _____

8. When I was in high school

- a) my major interest was in getting good grades as well as maintaining an active social life _____
- b) my major interest was in maintaining an active social and sports life rather than in getting high grades _____
- c) I did not want to go to school any longer, and wanted to make money _____
- d) I felt confused and did not know what I wanted to do _____

II. PRESENT LIFE EXPERIENCES

1. Financially and socially I feel the next five years

- a) will be reasonably successful _____
- b) will consist of two steps forward and one back _____
- c) are impossible to predict at present _____
- d) the future scares me _____

2. About my health, at the present time, I would say that

- a) I have always had perfect health, and I am certain I'll stay that way _____
- b) for the last few years, my general condition has been below par, but I believe I'll regain excellent health in the near future _____
- c) for some time now I have had a chronic illness (or disability) which is serious, and the probability of improvement is small _____
- d) I don't know for sure. I guess as healthy as anybody, but I haven't had a physical for years _____

3. About my psychological adjustment, I would say that

- a) I feel fairly secure emotionally _____
- b) I am happiest not living alone _____
- c) I probably do best living alone _____
- d) I do not think about my emotions _____

4. Like many people I am

- a) sometimes uneasy when I am alone _____
- b) sometimes uncomfortable when in a crowd _____
- c) sometimes concerned about dying _____
- d) hardly ever concerned with such matters _____

5. With regard to children

- a) I have doubts about how good a parent I would be _____
- b) I very much want a child of the same sex as I am _____
- c) I am not sure I want children _____
- d) I do not care what sex the child is, but I do want to have one (or perhaps two or three) _____
- e) I would like to have at least four or five children _____
- f) as far as I am concerned, my marriage would be most successful without any children _____
- g) I cannot have children (biological or other reason) _____

6. With regard to marriage

- a) I believe in marriage at some point _____
- b) I don't believe in marriage _____

III. THE PERSON WITH WHOM I AM THINKING OF BECOMING COMMITTED TO

1. My prospective mate

- a) is extremely attractive physically _____
- b) is not unusually attractive physically, but is likeable _____
- c) is someone I do not think of in terms of physical beauty or good looks _____
- d) embarrasses me because of his/her looks _____

2. My prospective mate

- a) comes from a family I greatly admire _____
- b) comes from a family I feel very much a part of _____
- c) has so little family closeness I feel sorry for him/her _____
- d) has a very irritating family, but I can overlook them _____

3. With regard to the family of my intended mate

- a) I am worried that she may become too much like her mother (or he like his father) _____
- b) I am concerned that she may become too much like her father (or he like his mother) _____
- c) I do not feel his/her parents will (do) play any significant role in our marriage _____

d) I do not think he/she is like either of his/her parents _____

4. I feel that my intended mate's parents

a) are better educated than my family _____

b) have considerably more money than my family _____

c) are not as socially acceptable as my family _____

d) I do not think about them in this way _____

5. In the relationship with my intended mate I feel that

a) he/she is more in charge than I am _____

b) we are equally in charge _____

c) I am more in charge than he/she is _____

d) neither of us is in charge _____

6. With regard to companionship, my intended mate and I

a) have many interests in common _____

b) have independent interests, but are tolerant and supportive of each other's activities _____

c) expect to develop interests in common _____

d) seem to have relatively little in common when we are not busy with social activities _____

7. With regard to religion

a) we are of the same faith and there are no conflicts _____

b) neither of us has had serious religious training, and we do not intend to become involved with any church _____

c) we are of different faiths, but have agreed to rear our children in one of them _____

d) we have opposing religious views, but are tolerant of each other's ideas _____

e) we would have no problems about religion if other people would stay out of our business _____

IV. ATTITUDES PRECEDING COMMITMENT

1. With regard to traveling and establishing a home

a) my intended mate's plans include nothing that is incompatible with my own wishes _____

b) we have not discussed this topic fully _____

c) I am leaving the decisions to him/her _____

d) He/she is leaving the decisions to me _____

2. With regard to sex

- a) my intended mate has had experience, but I have not _____
- b) I am more experienced than he/she _____
- c) it is important to me that he/she has had sexual experience before marriage _____
- d) we have both had premarital sex experience _____
- e) we are limiting our sex activity until after marriage _____
- f) we do not agree on our sex life at present _____

3. With regard to having children

- a) I would like to have children as soon as possible _____
- b) I would leave the decision about when to have children to my intended mate _____
- c) I would prefer to wait several years before having children _____
- d) I don't feel this is an important consideration _____

**V. MARRIAGE/LIVING TOGETHER AND THE FUTURE
(For later in the relationship)**

1. With regard to my occupational or vocational interests

- a) I feel I have the courage to pursue both my marriage and my interests, even when they conflict _____
- b) I feel I could sacrifice almost anything in order to have a happy marriage _____
- c) I see no reason for conflict between marriage and my other interests _____
- d) My intended mate has no ambitions or professional commitments which will jeopardize or interfere with our marriage _____
- e) My intended mate's devotion to his/her career interest is something I can easily admire and support _____
- f) My intended mate's devotion to his/her career is something I hope I can get more enthusiastic about as I understand him/her better _____

2. With regard to the future with my intended mate

- a) I sometimes think he/she may become ill _____
- b) I fear that he/she may become ill _____
- c) I fear that he/she will become superior intellectually or more important than I can become _____
- d) I never have had any doubts _____

3. With regard to the future of our marriage

- a) I am worried about becoming poor _____

- b) I am worried about the influence of our in-laws upon us _____
- c) I am troubled about the questions of how many children we should have _____
- d) it sometimes occurs to me that my intended mate might have an affair _____
- e) I prefer not to worry about things until they happen _____

4. With regard to the question of marriage, my intended mate and I

- a) have discussed our doubts and fears of marriage _____
- b) have had some doubts, but have not mentioned them _____
- c) may be afraid of hurting each other by bringing up the question of whether we are making a mistake _____
- d) do not have any doubts whatsoever _____
- e) used to have doubts but overcame them _____

5. With regard to our contemplated marriage

- a) I would like to postpone it, but am afraid of the consequences _____
- b) despite my doubts I prefer to go ahead with it _____
- c) I feel I can overcome any doubts since my love is great enough for two _____
- d) I would have doubts no matter whom I was marrying and should therefore not let these doubts stand in the way now _____

6. My plans for marriage include

- a) a wish to travel as soon as possible _____
- b) a desire to move from our present area and establish a home elsewhere _____
- c) a desire to settle down where we are as quickly as possible _____
- d) I have no plans beyond wishing to get married _____

7. With regard to having children

- a) I would like to have children as soon as possible _____
- b) I would leave the decision about when to have children to my intended mate _____
- c) I would prefer to wait several years before having children _____
- d) I don't feel this is an important consideration _____

TEST C

Using a separate sheet of paper, write down in order of preference the three activities listed here which you like most and the three which you like least.

Movies

Competitive sports (tennis, bowling, etc.)

Spectator sports

Outdoor activities (fishing, walking, bicycling, etc.)

Special gatherings with friends

Reading

Art appreciation (listening to music, visiting art galleries, etc.)

Politics

Hobbies (woodworking, sewing, stamp collecting, etc.)

Membership in organizations (school or college clubs, union activities, etc.)

Business or professional activities (beyond ordinary office hours)

Creative endeavour (writing, drawing, singing, acting, playing a musical instrument)

Television

Traveling

Theater

Night clubs

Dancing

Discussion groups

Civic activities

Being with a few friends of my own sex

When you and your partner compare sheets, first note those activities which neither of you checked off and decide whether you are both genuinely indifferent to all of these. Perhaps there are some in this group which you might enjoy trying together.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R. James (Jim) Cogle is a writer, researcher and funding consultant. He received his education at the University of New Brunswick and Acadia University. Jim is a lifelong student.

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