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Picking the Perfect Marriage Partner

"Loves You...loves You Not...Remember when finding love was all about picking the right petal? Today finding and maintaining love is still about choices you make, the options are a bit more complex, especially when you are trying to pick the ideal financial partner".

Love and Money, (E-book) p. 7 Money Management International.

Consider Your Expectations Before Marriage

"Any marriage is the blending of two families, not just two individuals," said Ben Silliman, family life extension specialist, University of Wyoming. A partner brings along a set of expectations for marriage that often reflect family background and what that person has observed from watching other family members and friends. A marriage is a merger of the traditions and expectations from the two families.

"What is important, then, is for partners to become aware of each other's expectations before going to the altar. Defining each partner's expectations is essential to the success of any marriage or couple relationship because matching behavior and expectations can be important for cooperation and satisfaction," said Silliman.

Couples who have conflicting expectations usually experience more problems in their relationship. For example, should one partner put his or her career on the back burner to stay home with the children? How will a couple share parenting responsibilities, housework and managing their money? How important is sex? Should a couple use vacation time to visit

relatives, or head for a popular vacation spot? Answers to some of these questions may be based on how their parents dealt with these issues.

Having a good understanding of a partner's expectations can strengthen a couple's relationship. It also can help a couple to understand each other's family legacy and to not simply repeat the successes or failures of the previous generation. Effective couples manage to identify and utilize the strengths of each family of origin, heal the wounds, and grow from the limits of each.

(Website: National Healthy Marriage Resource Center

<http://www.twoofus.org/educational-content/articles/consider-expectations-before-marriage/index.aspx>)

How Do You Know if You and Your Partner are Compatible?

According to Dr. John Van Epp, author of the program, P.I.C.K. a Partner (Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge; www.nojerks.com) it takes three things: **Time, Talk, and Togetherness**. Each of these three “T’s” is equally important to learning more about a potential partner. It is important to see that person in action in many different situations- having fun, being serious, working, alone with you, with their family, interacting with friends. He refers to five key things you want to learn about a potential partner and yourself as you spend time together. He calls them getting to know you “F.A.C.E.S. Family Dynamics and Background, Attitudes and Actions of a Mature Conscience, Compatibility Potential, Examples of Previous Friendship or Relationship Patterns, Skills for Relationships. See: “ **Are We Compatible?” Marriage Matters volume 2, Issue 3, Before You Begin for Dating Couples, by Ted G. Futris, Ph.D, Family Life Specialist, LuAnn Freppon-Duncan, M.S. , FCS Ext. Agent. , Ohio State University Extension. http://families.osu.edu/marriagematters/mm_2_3/bb23.pdf**

Some General Questions to Ask Yourself as You Consider a Long-Term Relationship:

- Have we taken the time to get to know each other?
- Do we have similar goals, values and expectations?
- Have I identified concerns about abuse/violence; sexuality; finances; or other red flags?
- Can we communicate with each other? Can we listen as well as talk?
- Are we willing to work toward a common goal? Willing to sacrifice for each other?
- Can we be flexible? Adaptable?
- Are we both optimists?

It is important to identify your expectations and those of your partner and how you feel about how various issues will be handled in the marriage. First take time to consider what your feelings and attitudes are in relation to each issue, then take some time to explore your partner’s attitudes and feelings regarding these issues. If you find you have opposite points of view regarding these issues, that might signal some red flags that must be addressed or might be an indication of your incompatibility before you move on to marriage:

Some Hot Topics include:

Money Matters, Sex and Intimacy and Affection, Family Background, Children and Parenting, Religion and Values, Time and Goals, Communication, Respect, Job Responsibilities, Friendship

Refer to the Student Handout for topics to discuss and observe. With each one listed are some positive and behaviors or attributes and some negative behaviors or warning signs to consider. There is also a list of questions attached to each topic that might be used to find out how you and your boyfriend/girlfriend feel about each topic.

Class Activities:

Daisy Activity: Give Students the half-sheet Daisy Handout as they come in the classroom. Have students fill the petals with positive and/or negative attributes of a good partner/healthy relationship; and discuss the answers.

Then have them divide into groups and discuss which attributes they think are the top 5. Call class back together and have each group list their top 5 on the board unless it has already been listed.

Refer to large daisy with pull-off petals (petals made with white paper laminated and a yellow center made out of cardboard covered with yellow poster paper.) On each petal list a behavior related to one of the attributes. Make sure you list both good and bad behaviors on the petals. (Example has 22 petals and 11 positive behaviors and 11 negative behaviors relating to the various issues identified.)

Have students pull of a petal, read it to the class and identify what issue it falls under and whether it is a positive behavior or a negative behavior and indicate what issue it falls under.

Place under Smiley Face  or Red Flag 

Daisy Petal Activity-Loves Me, Loves Me Not

Variation 1: Pass a Large laminated petal out to each student or group to fill out and come stick on white board, and discuss why picked.

Variation 2: Have individuals or groups come and write attributes on petals on board, discuss why picked.

Beach Ball Activities: After discussing positive and negative attributes or behaviors related to the various issues couples face in marriage, divide class into 3 groups and make 3 circles. Give each group a ball (Each ball will have questions taped on related to the various issues you are discussing). Have the group throw the ball. Whoever catches it reads the question their right thumb lands on and answers it.

Music: Using current songs have students analyze the lyrics for characteristics of a healthy and unhealthy relationship. Groups can be given different songs and present findings to the class and their feelings about it. Or pick one with a positive message and or negative behaviors or attitudes in it and have the students write down the messages as they listen to the songs. Example: “Just the Way You Are” by Bruno Mars.

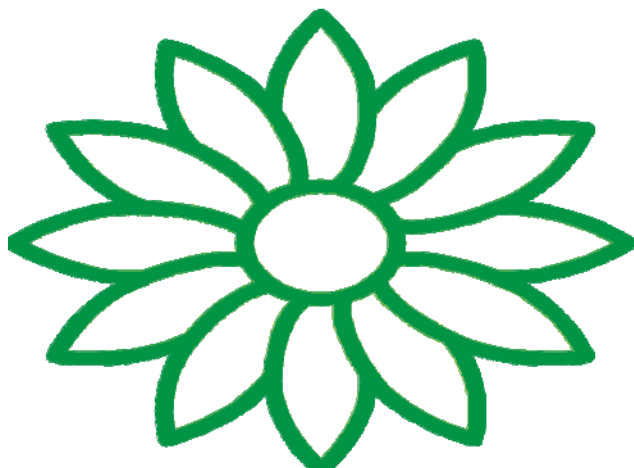
Video Clips and Discussion Guides: Pick a movie like Enchanted, Shrek, watch some clips of the movie and use discussion guide to help pull out examples of expectations- realistic and unrealistic or other points that are important to consider as you date and look for someone to marry.

What We Wish We Knew

Variation 1: Assign students to talk to couples (young or old) who they feel have a good marriage, and ask them what they wish they had known before they got married and why. Present findings to the class, write a paper, etc.

Variation 2: Have a panel of couples come in (different days or not) in varying stages of marriage, to discuss what they wish they had known before they got married.

Write down 6 attributes of a healthy relationship and 6 attributes of an unhealthy relationship



(Enlarge)

Loves Me...Loves Me Not Class Resources:

“Consider Expectations Before Marriage”, Ben Silliman, Family Life Extension Specialist, University of Wyoming. National Healthy Marriage Resource Center
<http://www.twoofus.org/educational-content/articles/consider-expectations-before-marriage/index.aspx>

“The Top 25 Signs to Watch Out For”, article by Mark Ogletree, MFT, PhD, Victor W. Harris, MS. Strongermarriage.org/htm/datingtop-25

Financial Smart Start for NewlyWeds _ **“Debt in Marriage”** , FSFCS202 James P. Marshall, PhD. Assistant Professor –Family Life , Laura Connerly, Instructor – Family Resource Management University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension, Family & Consumer Sciences Publication.
http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSFCS202.pdf

Love and Money – Your Guide to the Coupling of Finance and Romance, (E-book) Money Management International <http://www.moneymanagement.org/Budgeting-Tools/Financial-eBooks/Couples-Finances-eBook.aspx>

“Are You Relationship Smart”? Factsheet from University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.http://www.fcs.uga.edu/ext/gamarriages/docs/CHFD_E89.pdf

“Are We Compatible?” Marriage Matters volume 2, Issue 3, Before You Begin for Dating Couples, by Ted G. Futris, Ph.D, Family Life Specialist, LuAnn Freppon-Duncan, M.S. , FCS Ext. Agent, Ohio State University Extension.
http://families.osu.edu/marriagematters/mm_2_3/bb23.pdf

Before I Say “I Do” Fact Sheet (FLM-FS-1-01 Melinda J. Hill, M.ED., CFCS, Family & Consumer Science Agent, Wayne County, Ohio State University Extension, The Ohio State University.
<http://ohioline.osu.edu/flm01/FS01.html>

“Getting to ‘Really’ Know You “, Marriage Matters volume 1, Issue 1 “Before You Begin For Dating Couples b Marriage Matters volume 1, Issue 1 y Cynthia B. Torppa, Ph.D., FCS Agent, OSU Extension http://families.osu.edu/marriagematters/mm_1_1/byb11.pdf

The Utah Marriage Handbook – Keys to a Healthy Marriage, StrongerMarriage.org, Utah State University Extension. 2007





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Just The Way You Are (Bruno Mars)

Oh her eyes, her eyes
Make the stars look like they're not shining
Her hair, her hair
Falls perfectly without her trying

She's so beautiful
And I tell her every day

Yeah I know, I know
When I compliment her
She won't believe me
And it's so, it's so
Sad to think she don't see what I see

But every time she asks me do I look okay
I say

When I see your face
There's not a thing that I would change
Cause you're amazing
Just the way you are
And when you smile,
The whole world stops and stares for awhile
Cause girl you're amazing
Just the way you are

Her lips, her lips
I could kiss them all day if she'd let me
Her laugh, her laugh
She hates but I think it's so sexy

She's so beautiful
And I tell her every day

Oh you know, you know, you know
I'd never ask you to change
If perfect is what you're searching for
Then just stay the same

So don't even bother asking
If you look okay
You know I say

When I see your face
There's not a thing that I would change
Cause you're amazing
Just the way you are
And when you smile,
The whole world stops and stares for awhile
Cause girl you're amazing
Just the way you are

The way you are
The way you are
Girl you're amazing
Just the way you are

When I see your face
There's not a thing that I would change
Cause you're amazing
Just the way you are
And when you smile,
The whole world stops and stares for awhile
Cause girl you're amazing
Just the way you are

Other songs (Positive):

The way I Am- Ingrid Michaelson

All the Way- Frank Sinatra

Naturally- Selena Gomez

Built to Last- Meleah

It's Your Love- Tom McGraw and Faith Hill

Mary's Song- Taylor Swift

Negative songs- check out billboard's top 100 for a complete list.

Loves You, Loves You Not

Topics for Discussion – Student Handout

Money and Finance

Positive Behaviors and Actions

- Puts half of income into savings
- Shares common attitudes about money
- Willing to talk openly about finances and financial habits/tendencies
- Honest about money
- Tries things before buying

Negative Behaviors and Warning Signs

- Spends all of his/her paycheck on a long board
- Keeps up with the Joneses
- Saves too little
- Frequent mall visits
- Eating out too often
- Owning more shoes than you could wear in a month

Questions to Ask

- Can we talk about money?
- Are you a saver or spender when it comes to money?
- Do you consider going to the movies and having a vacation every year a necessity or a luxury?
- What are our financial goals?

Caring and Affection

Positive Behaviors and Actions

- Respects your personal boundaries
- Shows affection according to your needs not theirs
- Provides emotional support
- Is aware of your life, thoughts, and feelings
- Demonstrates empathy, sensitivity, and understanding during interactions

Negative Behaviors and Warning Signs

- Unwilling to show affection in public
- Doesn't respect your personal boundaries
- Forgets important events

Questions to Ask

- What is your love language/how do you tend to express love?
- How did your family show affection?
- What are your personal boundaries?
- What types of affection are you comfortable expressing in public?

Family Background

Positive Behaviors and Actions

- Doesn't shy away from hugs from mom
- Raised with similar values
- Invites you to family functions

Negative Behaviors and Warning Signs

- Ignores calls from parents and make rude comments about them
- Complains about spending time with your family
- Has difficulty relating to his/her family

Questions to Ask

- What was your childhood like?
- Was your family an affectionate one?

What are your family holiday traditions?
What do you like and dislike about your family?

Parenting

Positive Behaviors and Actions

- Shares similar goals regarding future family
- Shares similar parenting/discipline philosophy
- Shares similar expectations after birth

Negative Behaviors and Warning Signs

- Tries to change your plans for a future family
- Has an authoritarian personality
- Has an extreme or stubborn view of gender/spousal roles and is unwilling to compromise.

Questions to Ask

- Do you want to have children?
- If we decide we do, how many children do you want to have?
- What kind of parent do you think you will be?
- What is your parenting philosophy?
- How do you feel about the mother staying at home?

Values

Positive Behaviors/Actions

- Lives what they believe spiritually
- You have similar religious values
- Is responsible
- Takes time to strengthen their spirituality
- Is mindful of the world around them
- Is at peace with themselves
- Feels a responsibility within the community

Negative Behaviors/Warning Signs

- Tells offensive jokes about religion
- Has extreme views on politics, family, religion, and world affairs
- Exhibits illegal behaviors, stealing, cheating, and lying
- Is lazy and irresponsible
- Needs to make major social or emotional changes in his/her life
- Promises he/she will change after the wedding

Questions to Ask

- Does spirituality play an important part in your life?
- Do you think faith and spirituality are important in a relationship?
- What is your image of God?
- Do you drink, do drugs, smoke?

Time and Goals

Positive Behaviors/Actions

- Both value education
- Shares some same goals, dreams, and aspirations
- Manages time to accomplish responsibilities and personal enjoyment

Negative Behaviors/Warning Signs

- While you want to go to college, your partner wants to drop out and start a band—contrary to original agreement.
- Watches TV or texts all the time

Questions to Ask

- What do we as a couple want out of life?
- What do you think you'll be doing in 5 or 10 years?
- What do you do with your free time?
- Do we share similar future goals and expectations?

Communication

Positive Behaviors/Actions

- Partner is able to talk through a problem and is willing to compromise
- Does not shy away from conflict and makes effort to work through issues
- Admits to being wrong or making mistakes

Negative Behaviors/Warning Signs

- When conflict arises, they walk away
- Fails to admit to being wrong or making mistakes
- Frequently brings past mistakes that had been resolved

Questions to Ask

- What is your love language?
- Do you think we listen to one another well?
- Do I/you have any problems that should be dealt with?
- Are we both willing to share intimately and honestly with each other?
- How are we different? Similar?
- Do you expect or want me to change?
- Why did other relationships end?

Respect

Positive Behaviors/Actions

- Is happy when you succeed
- Encourages you to develop your talents and interests
- Seeks to build a relationship with your family
- Meek and humble but has personal confidence
- Is not possessive and gives you freedom for personal interests
- Is positive and uplifting in comments and sincerely considers your ideas
- They treat parents and siblings with respect

Negative Behaviors/Warning Signs

- Partner always tries to “one-up” your achievements
- Is controlling and manipulative
- Accuses you of having other relationships
- Constantly compares to previous relationships with boy/girlfriends
- Exhibits behaviors that indicate deep insecurity behaviors, excessive jealousy, uncontrollable temper, and inflexibility
- Exhibits negative or critical traits
- Is verbally, physically, or emotionally abusive to you

Questions to Ask

- Do we handle conflict well?
- Can we both forgive?
- Who do you have the most respect for and why?
- What would you do if you were late for work, and someone needed help?

Responsibilities

Positive Behaviors/Actions

- Doesn't shirk duties as a group member working on a project
- Enjoys work
- Turns assignments in on time
- Participates in household clean-up
- Owns up to their actions and mistakes

Negative Behaviors/Warning Signs

- Expects everyone else to do everything for him/her
- Their mom cleans their room
- Refuses to get a job for no substantial reason

Questions to Ask

- What chores do you have at home?
- Did you do your chores or homework without being asked?
- How will we make decisions together?
- When do you complete your homework?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?

Friendship

Positive Behaviors/Actions

- There's more to the relationship than just physical- you are friends
- Supports you in having time for yourself
- Allows you to spend time with your friends too
- Takes an interest in people
- Plans fun and creative dates
- You have inside jokes with one another

Negative Behaviors/Warning Signs

- S/he guilt trips you into letting them copy your answers on an assignment
- Jealous of you and your friends and time you might spend with them
- Selfish with their time and their pursuits
- Exhibits behaviors that are very self-centered, the world revolves around him/her
- Demands constant knowledge of your whereabouts
- Tears you down and then comes back later promising that it will never happen again

Questions to Ask

- How would you feel if I want a night out with my friends now and then?
- Can we each pursue our own interests?
- Do you need or want time alone?
- What is your favorite thing to do?
- Have you ever given up on a friendship?