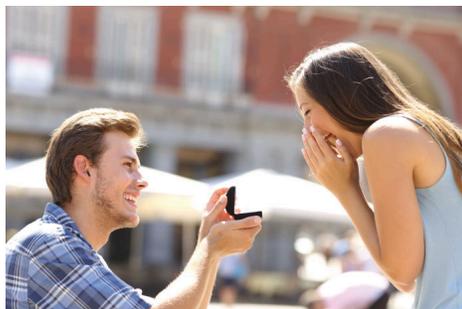


Ask a Specialist: 10 Things You Should Do Before Saying "I Do"

Naomi Brower

09/30/2015



Being in love is exciting and wonderful, and for some people it's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of romance. Many people spend more time planning for a wedding than they spend planning for a marriage. Before deciding to tie the knot, consider these tips to help create a more happily ever after.

1. Ask: Am I ready? The happiest relationships are built on a foundation of two happy and healthy people who are ready to take on the challenges of a new life together. Those who are ready to be in a long-term relationship have dealt with their own personal challenges and issues and are not looking for someone to make them happy or to "fix" them in some way (or vice versa).
2. Take time. In order to really get to know someone, it takes talking (mutual self-disclosure) + being together (in a variety of situations) + time (*at least* 90 days) (Van Epp, 2007). Because we are usually on our best behavior when we first meet and it takes time for patterns of behavior to emerge, this is a process that can't be rushed, even if you spend a lot of time together.
3. Be extra cautious in long-distance relationships. While online dating is a common way to meet people, steer clear of commitment without spending a lot of time in person in many different situations. It is easier to show only our best selves in long-distance relationships.
4. Play detective. Ask deep and meaningful questions that will help you know if you are compatible with the person you are dating. For example, check out

these [10 Questions to Ask Before Saying I Do](#).

To make sure we aren't biased about how we are viewing the person we are dating, it may also be helpful to think about how others might view him or her, or even ask others about their opinions and listen for warning signs you may have missed.

5. Start to become part of the family. Much of who we are was learned from growing up in our family, so we can learn a lot about what someone will be like as a partner and parent from observing, asking questions and spending time with their family. If there are concerns about a partner's family or negative traits that a partner has learned from his or her family, you may want to think twice before getting too serious. While change is possible, it takes time and effort, and it is much easier to change before getting into a serious relationship.
6. Watch for personality compatibility. While we probably won't have everything in common with our partner, happy relationships often have many of these traits in common: emotional temperament, sense of humor, intelligence, energy levels, similar recreation interests and how affection is expressed.
7. Be aware of each other's values. Some of the biggest arguments in relationships relate to those things we value most because we have strong feelings and opinions about them. Having similarities in how religious/spiritual you are, having common financial views and goals and having similar views about family life are all major factors in lasting relationship satisfaction.
8. Watch for daily life compatibility. While it may not be romantic, the truth is that most of the time we spend with someone in a long-term relationship will be in the everyday routine of life. Consider such things as: Who will earn and manage the money? How will household responsibilities be divided? How will free time be spent? The answers to these questions can be crucial to the happiness of relationships.
9. Learn conflict resolution skills. Because we are all different, conflict is inevitable in even the happiest of relationships. When handled in a positive manner, overcoming conflict can strengthen relationships. Having a conflict plan in place can be helpful. Begin by setting the ground rules, such as choosing when and where to deal with conflict and remember to practice good listening and communication skills.
10. Plan now to keep your relationship strong. Just like cars, relationships need regular preventative maintenance in order to run smoothly and prevent problems. Research suggests that relationship

education (such as attending a class or reading a relationship book together, etc.) can help relationships stay strong. Consider what you will do as a couple to keep your relationship strong.

For more information and class schedules on relationships, visit HealthyRelationshipsUtah.org.

By Naomi Brower, USU Extension
associate professor, 801-399-8206,
naomi.brower@usu.edu

Direct column topics to Julene Reese,
julene.reese@usu.edu, 435-757-6418.