**Dummies Guide to choosing the right life partner – 10 pointers**

We make mistakes all the time, some of them obvious hence stupid and some of them more unknown, where we think about it and still make the wrong choice. Well, most of our mistakes are learning experiences and we can recover from them mentally but some of them are not so forgiving. One of the unforgiving mistakes that has started becoming more common then not is choosing our life partner. People do recover from it but it still has a lasting impact on them or the other person or their offspring.

Most people are on a look out for a life-partner and have found it to be one of life’s compromises. There are arguments of how important it is to have a life-partner, but the undeniable part is the fact that having the right life-partner can bring much joy and happiness in our lives. On the other hand, the wrong one can be a constant barrier to our solace.

In almost all cases, when you live and share your life with someone, you have fights, conflicts and times when you wonder how you ended up with this person. In these times, we tend to ask ourselves a few fundamental questions like, how do you decide if you will be able to live happily ever after with that person? What is it that your decision hinges on when you consider whether to continue with that relationship or not?

In other cases, you may find yourself attracted to someone and you are eager to find out if this person could be the perfect match. You ask your friends, you ask yourself, and sometimes to your own demise, you convince yourself that he or she is the right person or the best compromise available. But, how can you be sure?

Sometimes you blindside people. You have a good friend who likes you, but you never see them as a potential partner. Are you missing out on a potential partner who you know you already have things in common with as they are on your blind side?

In my case, I had experienced guides in the form of my mom and dad who used to discuss with us what works and what does not work in a long term partnership and experienced advice is always helpful to develop our perspective.

This article is an attempt to answer some of the above questions, some hints at what you should really take cue from and some red alerts that you should not ignore. Afterall, separation is the most painful of human experience after death or loss. Death or loss of someone close to you is not in your control, but I believe avoiding separation is. I think if you are looking for a life partner, there are some fundamentals that you should not overlook.

So how do you know he or she is the one?

I have been happily married to my life partner for more than a decade and I am as happy as I can possibly be. When I see my friends feeling the pain of separation or facing the anxiety of deciding on a life partner; I felt the need to share what I have learnt in all these years on what to look for in a person that will help you find happiness in the pursuit of life and someone to cherish it with.

Disclaimer – this is not for people who believe love is the answer for lifetime partnership because we need much more than love to sustain a happy relationship.

1. Similar values and overall life alignment. If you are a person with integrity, you will probably not tolerate lies, if you are into minimalism and environment, you might find it difficult to adjust to a more extravagant or untidy person. If you believe in giving back, self-centred people will annoy you.

For some people it may be giving back that is important to them; for others it may be money; for some people their life goal may be to become popular; others are idealists. We are all different, but our overall perspective is quite important. The thing is, in the long run, it is difficult to live with someone unless you share their underlying feelings and values.

Similarly, values on fairness and integrity are quite important to align. By the time we are in our late teens, we develop our own version of fair and unfair; good and bad. When you see someone as a potential partner for life, make sure that your good and bad and your commitment towards them are aligned.

Oh My God, we both love dogs and cars, we are so similar, let’s get married. Hmmm…not that simple.

1. Would you choose Albert Einstein or Donald Trump? Well, if you are looking for a life-partner, I would advise neither. One of my friends is an all or nothing person, either he will be totally with his girlfriend or totally with his friends, either he will quit alcohol completely or become a drunk; a complete health freak or total sloth; the result is generally that he ends up on the wrong side of the balance and his girlfriend ends up out of the picture. A smart person will generally choose the harmony of things and will be willing to compromise when necessary.

If you meet someone who is very rigid in his/her views and their lifestyle is generally not open to learning and adapting, then that is a warning sign. A complete fitness freak, a complete nerd or a complete workaholic is not someone you would want to be with, well unless you are the same. Extremities of anything is a no-go.

1. Does a perfect person exist? Probably not but striving to improve your relationship together is the next best thing. Following up from the previous point, showing a keenness to learn and improve yourself is for me, the most attractive trait. You will know this when you see them accepting their mistakes and apologising when due, just as you should. You must be thinking ‘good luck with that’, but believe me, there are people who want to develop and grow and then of course there are the narcissistic, egotistic, self-righteous, know-it-all people (for lack of a better word).

If you have to keep compromising on your side to make the relationship work, ultimately you will buckle, and you will be taken for granted. After a few months of courtship, it is a good idea to talk about improvements that both of you could make to help the relationship, it is definitely not one-way. Similarly, for partners, it’s always a good idea to spend time together and have an honest talk about what each of you can work on to better the relationship.

The ‘I will accept my mistake only after you accept your mistake’ attitude does not work. As a man who has watched a lot of friends suffer in this area, it is time to realise that media have taught us all to aim for perfect partner, when really there is no perfect. Also, I have noticed people thinking that a good and happy relationship happens automatically as a result of meeting the right person. I very often see my friends get confused and disappointed when they realise that every relationship needs a lot of work to make it a happy one. They then think there’s something wrong with the relationship or the person. As an outsider, I often don’t think there’s anything wrong, it’s just that you always must continually take positive steps together to make it a happy one.

1. Cares for one, cares for all - Look at how much they care about their family, how considerate they are towards their parents. If someone badmouths their parents or the person who supported them, believe me, that’s a clear warning sign. Do not expect them to be considerate to you if they are not to their caretakers/ parents. Compassion is a virtue which provides clarity in thought and communication and you should look for a person who has a level of compassion toward others. It is important to see how they respect and react to strangers in general and their loved ones in particular. What they talk about them esp. when they are not around.
2. One of my friends fell in love with an American guy visiting New Zealand on a working holiday, they got married and have a kid, but the guy realised that he likes his country much more than he likes her. My friend had to make a choice between living with him and living in NZ. Not a very happy ending, not even close.

Geographical origin and cultural background are a big factor. You should look where the person is from, because quite frankly, long distance relationships mostly don’t work. Similarly, it is always easier to be with someone who has an upbringing like yours. Marrying someone from a different culture sounds exotic, but the differences can sometimes take their toll in the long term. The greater the cultural gap, the more there is to bridge. You must have a higher level of appreciation and understanding of each other’s differences. It is surmountable if your values are aligned but the relationship can take a lot more work.

1. Opposites attract or at least create balance. You do not need to be similar in likes and dislikes, similar interests help but are not as necessary as similar alignment and values. You do not need to get the same results from the Myers Briggs test. In fact, I have noticed that opposite personal traits help to create overall balance. If you are an extrovert, looking for an extrovert may look natural but may lead to conflict or overdose of extroverts.

“Oh my gosh they are both so social, such a nice couple.” But who is looking after their kids? Well, mostly the babysitter and the dog.

1. Let there be peace. If your partner gives you peace of mind when you are with them and is ok with you not having to talk or do anything and just be yourself, that’s super important. Most of the time in life people like to have some quiet time and if your partner enhances your peace, that’s what you want. In my relation, we have learnt this the hard way, initially it was always ‘you sound off, tell me what is wrong’ which was often a start of spiralling cause and effect, justifications and counter justifications. What we have learnt now is that we both need our alone time and anytime we are not in a mood to talk or listen, we just do not, no questions asked.
2. First love is always special but do not let it be the benchmark for all other relationships. Do not compare your potential partners to your first love if this is not your first love. Every relationship is different, and it is not fair for anyone to be compared to someone you fell in love with when you hit puberty. One of my friends is looking for someone with whom she feels the same way she felt with her first partner. Well, she is still looking.
3. Physicality is temporary, mentality is permanent. Hotness goes when you hit a certain age, but life does not end there. Physical attraction is important to hit it off but connecting on a mental level is far more important and sustainable. Six packs do not remain forever neither does a glowing soft spotless skin.
4. Once disloyal, always disloyal. Let’s run through a scenario to explain this. You are friends with a married man, and you find him attractive. He talks to you about how his marriage does not work, and how he is unhappy with his current life; you feel his pain and start to sympathise with him; you spend more and more time with him, and he pampers you and makes you feel special.

You both hook up while he is still with his wife. While he is fighting with his wife and trying to separate from her, you are happy you have found your man. Ok, Stop right there.

Stop right there, you have not found your man, what you have found is a person with very low integrity, a cheater with a mid-life crisis. Anyone who is disloyal and dishonest in their current relationship cannot and should not be trusted. He will most likely do the same with you.

This last point is a difficult one, it does not mean that anybody with a past or currently in a relationship is a no-go. Important here is how they separate and how much integrity and respect they have for their past or current partner. Anyone who blames their current partner for their sad life will mostly likely always blame their current partner for their sad life. You do not want to be there.

It is quite difficult to find the right person, but if you try to find a good person first and go from there it will set you in good stead. Sharing your life with someone will always have challenges but with the above checklist, you should be able to hit the jackpot.