

is No Guarantee
Love

*Essential Ingredients to Creating
A Successful Relationship*



PETER HECTOR

Crunchbird Publishing

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Dedication

*To my wife Diomira, whose love has
taught me the meaning of peace and happiness.
You have been the inspiration for this book.*



*In memory of my father
Richard A. Hector Sr. 1906 - 2001*

Acknowledgements

I wanted to create a book for people who want to find happiness and fulfillment in their love relationship. It had to be a book they would read and keep within close reach for easy reference. —Indeed, an enormous undertaking. However, the development and completion of this project would not have been possible without the people who gave their enthusiastic support.

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PH.

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	vii
<i>Prologue: The future of relationships</i>	xiii
CHAPTER ONE:	
<i>Let's start from the beginning</i>	3
CHAPTER TWO:	
<i>Developing a plan</i>	20
CHAPTER THREE:	
<i>Your game plan for dating</i>	27
CHAPTER FOUR:	
<i>Dating</i>	46
CHAPTER FIVE:	
<i>Getting to know your partner better</i>	58
CHAPTER SIX:	
<i>Things to know before you fall in love</i>	68
CHAPTER SEVEN:	
<i>What is love?</i>	87

CHAPTER EIGHT:	
<i>Now that you are a couple when is the right time to have sex?</i>	112
CHAPTER NINE:	
<i>Making a commitment to each other</i>	127
CHAPTER TEN:	
<i>What do men and women want from a relationship?</i>	137
CHAPTER ELEVEN:	
<i>Sex, are men getting enough?</i>	160
CHAPTER TWELVE:	
<i>Sharing Intimacy</i>	179
CHAPTER THIRTEEN:	
<i>Children if and when</i>	204
CHAPTER FOURTEEN	
<i>Coping with In-laws</i>	219
CHAPTER FIFTEEN:	
<i>Epilogue</i>	238
<i>Notes:</i>	241
<i>Appendix:</i>	251
<i>About the Author:</i>	254



Introduction

One in every three first marriages in the U.S will end within ten years, and one in five will end within five years, according to a November 2001 report issued by Centers for Disease control and Prevention. The report “First Marriage Dissolution, Divorce, and Remarriage: United States,” also notes that 43% of first marriages will end within 15 years.¹

Although recent statistics paint a bleak picture of the future of marriage, it seems that most people have not totally lost faith in the institution itself. Also, newer studies have revealed that the statistics on the success of remarriages are even less encouraging; remarried couples divorce at an even higher rate than first timers. Yet it is not uncommon to see many divorced people remarry for a second and even a third time.

It should be no wonder that, despite the statistics so many people are willing to risk the heartbreak, sorrow, and economic losses resulting from failed marriages. People need companionship, and marriage has been the accepted structure for men and women to live with each other for as long as we can remember.

However, over the past few decades, the staggering increase in the divorce rate in America has left young people in doubt about the idea of marriage itself. Many have opted for the less traditional arrangement, i.e., living together without the benefit of the marriage vows. One U.S. Census report “Marital Status

and living Arrangements, 1996”, showed an 85% increase in cohabitation within the last decade alone. But does this ensure compatibility in marriage? ²

According to numerous studies, the rate of failure in common law relationships is 50% higher than that of traditional marriages. So the question is: What can couples do to reduce the rate of failure in their own relationship? Even more significant questions are: What are the reasons for these failures in so many relationships. Why do people who want to share their lives together find it so difficult to sustain long term relationships with each other? ¹³

The answer to these questions and more is the focus of this book. One of the principal causes of the high casualty rate in marital relationships lies in the sources of our life- long teaching and information about marriages. Most of us are familiar with the emotional side of romantic love. Less commonly known are the biological connections to these emotions. Anthropologist Helen Fisher ⁴ (more about this in Chapter 7) has documented evidence that links the biological and chemical processes of our bodies to love and attachment between males and females.

In her study, Fisher notes that our bodies produce chemical substances known to cause attachment in humans. She suggests that nature has provided a way to bring couples together and keep them sufficiently motivated until the creation of offspring is accomplished. Additional clinical experiments link reduced levels of these “love-enhancing compounds” in the human body with the decline of passionate love and attachment between couples. Fisher believes that the reduced levels of these chemicals may be directly responsible for separation and divorce in romantic relationships.

Most young people entering a relationship for the first time are not sure what is expected of them to be a good partner. The majority of the people we interviewed admitted they were not

looking very far into the future when they got married. All they knew was that they were in love with someone who met their social and sexual requirements—at least the way they saw them at the time. For most of us, our parents have been our only source of first-hand information about marriage. But times have changed; what may have worked for our parents in their time may not work for us today. And with the high rate of failure reported in present-day marriages, it would seem unwise for us to use past-day examples of marriages as role models for our own relationships. We need to find better solutions.

Love is No Guarantee guides you through the process of finding love and keeping it alive in the face of today's challenges. It is not a book about psychology. I am not a psychologist and this is not an attempt to psychoanalyze why people behave the way they do; numerous well-qualified professionals have already done an excellent job in that area. This is a look at the practical, logical reasons for people's actions and the resulting consequences.

Part one covers all aspects of dating; guiding you to some of the places you can meet eligible people who share similar interests with you.

When you feel you are attracted to someone, *Love is No Guarantee* walks you through the steps you must take before you fall in love; yes, that's right, *before* you fall in love. Even when you believe you've found the right person, you will have to take steps to make certain "what you see is what you are getting."

For example, I've heard men complain they fell in love with women they met in a work environment. These men were attracted to and sought women who held interesting jobs and led socially stimulating lives. Imagine the surprise to those who married these women, only to discover that their wives want to give up their careers to become stay-at-home moms. Usually the relationship becomes strained because the men may feel they

have been misled. Likewise, a man who is financially well off may marry a career woman but secretly plans to convince her to give up her career and become a housewife or a “trophy” wife.

When you do decide to choose someone you believe may be right for you, this guide suggests ways to confirm your initial feeling. You will be able to determine if, in fact, you can share a life together. These steps are relatively simple to follow, yet many people bypass them only to have regrets later. Remember, to enjoy a fulfilling relationship even with someone you love, you must share compatibility in the important areas of your life. You’ll stand a better chance of understanding your partner if you both share similar values, personal habits, and opinions. You don’t have to agree on everything; being in total agreement with your partner at all times can produce boredom in the relationship. In fact, even on some important matters, you can have different opinions. But at least you should see eye-to-eye in matters critical to your day-to-day existence.

For example, if you grew up in a wealthy family and have always appreciated, enjoyed, and looked forward to the finer conveniences of life, you may have difficulty living with a mate whose philosophy is to live on the bare necessities, especially if he or she believes accumulation of wealth is immoral. However, your relationship may still survive if you vote Republican and your partner is a staunch Democrat.

Love is No Guarantee explains what men and women want from each other in a relationship and how you can determine what your prospective partner expects from a relationship with you. Being aware of each other’s expectations gives each person a clear picture about the other’s willingness and ability to meet his or her needs.

When you are reasonably satisfied that the mate you chose is “the one” and you decide to formalize your relationship, Part

Two provides valuable tips to make your relationship a success. This may be even more important than it seems because the challenges we face on a day-to-day basis can cause us to neglect our relationships. And by the time we realize our mistake, it might be too late to repair any damage caused.

You will learn:

- ◆ What men really want
- ◆ What women really want
- ◆ How to tell if your partner truly loves you
- ◆ How to maintain love and intimacy while raising a family
- ◆ How to communicate your most intimate needs to your partner
- ◆ How to maintain a satisfying sexual relationship with the one you love
- ◆ How to deal with in-laws without losing your hair
- ◆ The reasons why love dies

Love is No Guarantee teaches you to recognize signs that indicate potential trouble spots in your relationship before they get out of hand.

Each relationship has its own problems but many share similarities. It is my wish that you use the knowledge and experiences gained from others to seek solutions that can benefit you. It is my sincere hope that you can sit back, look at your own situation, and ask yourself whether your beliefs, expectations, and actions so far have worked for you. If so, congratulations! If not, you may want to adopt some of the practical applications outlined in this book to improve your own relationship.

This book is for people who want to find peace and happiness in their love relationship.





PROLOGUE

The Future of Relationships

*T*s there any good reason to get married today? Can one be realistically expected to stay married to the same person for the rest of one's life? Whose idea was it to get married in the first place?

These questions might seem frivolous to some, but when we look at the increasing numbers of failures of marriages in our society today, it should come as no surprise that people everywhere are questioning the merits of the institution of marriage, an institution that has served as the foundation of our society for generations.

According to the Statistical Abstract of the United States, the overall numbers of marriages in the United States is increasing. Yet the divorce rate is steadily increasing (200 percent within the last 30 years). Today, it is estimated that over 50 percent of marriages end in divorce.⁵ Every day people around us are in the process of splitting up. The situation gets worse if we consider the numerous cases in which relationships have technically ended, but the couples remain together because it's convenient to do so. These partners have long ago distanced themselves from each other, but social, economic, and other reasons keep them together.

Also, the findings of a recent Rutgers University study reveal an even bleaker picture for the institution of marriage. The report titled “State of Our Union”⁶ indicated that (1) Over the past 40 years, many couples do not choose marriage as their first living-together experience and as a status of parenthood. (2) There has been a tremendous increase in the number of children born out of wedlock, which has increased the number of children who grow up in fragile families. (3) Even with the increased freedom to leave a marriage by divorce, high percentages of the remaining marriages are still unhappy.

In a confidential survey carried out in the United States and Canada,⁷ people were asked to describe the state of their marriage or love relationships. Though not surprising the majority of answers received are unsettling to our society.

Rick, a department store security chief, said, “If I knew then what I know now, I would not have gotten married in the first place.”

Andre 29, a clerical worker, said, “Women seem to be so nice when you first meet them. After you’re married, it’s as though they become someone else. It seems like they show all their good points until you give them that ring, then ‘Wham,’ you begin to see their real characters.”

Sandra, a beautician at a downtown salon, said, “We get along OK but my husband is not as romantic as he used to be, and the closeness we had is no longer there. When Stan and I first got married, we were really in love. We were so excited about our plans for the future. Now, I like my husband, we get along just fine, but we have our separate lives. I don’t feel in love; we seldom have sex. It has been like this for years. I guess that’s how marriage is supposed to be.”

Many people have come to the conclusion that marriage

will never deliver on the promise of joy and happiness they were conditioned to believe. They are convinced that really great marriages exist only in Hollywood movies. Therefore people should accept this reality and be happy with what they have, because if you live under the illusion that yours would be the exception, you are sure to be disappointed.

People tend to begin relationships with the best of intentions. These people are genuinely in love and are fascinated by their plans and great expectations for a bright future. But as time passes by, these same people get confused. They watch with great disappointment the deterioration and ultimate collapse of their relationships. They are unable to understand the reasons for these collapses, hence are powerless to do anything to salvage the situation. This disillusionment is devastating and make them wonder if any love relationship can be expected to survive.

Some people have made many attempts at finding lasting romantic love relationships. After several failed endeavors, they are convinced that, like other fantasies, romantic love relationships are unattainable. Some women are convinced that most of the good, eligible men are already taken. The rest, they say, are too old, too young, too insensitive, and, in many cases, too set in their ways.

Men, on the other hand, might believe the reason women are still available is because they are either unattractive, too materialistic, or simply carrying too much baggage. Yet people continue to fall in love, driven by a passion that refuses to be extinguished. It's as if their natural instincts say if they can somehow find true love, they can look forward to long-lasting happiness. So why does this happiness continue to elude people? What is this force so powerful that seems to prevent them from realizing their innermost desires?

Relationships succeed or fail for many reasons. However,

since each relationship is unique, there can be no hard-and-fast solutions to the multitude of problems experienced by couples. Over time, psychologists have learned a great deal about how people relate to each other. Thanks to the many years of in-depth research, clinical experiments, and human psychological analysis, enough information is now available to assist people who really want to find solutions to their marital problems.

Surveyed Couples

In the preparation of this book, I studied hundreds of cases relating to couples who are now married, or have been married or in a love relationship. With the help of two assistants, I interviewed 254 people in the United States and Canada. Many of our surveys were conducted in person, but we also got a flood of responses from people contacted on the Internet. Our findings, though not scientific, led us to these overwhelming conclusions: ⁸

- ◆ Overall, most people feel their lives would be more fulfilled if they could share it with a love companion.
- ◆ Many people spend a great portion of their lives in the quest for love. In a great many cases, they enter marriage for the wrong reasons.
- ◆ One of the major causes of dissatisfaction in life and unhappiness in society today results from failed unions between men and women.
- ◆ Truly understanding the reasons why so many relationships fail, gives people the ammunition necessary (a) to improve their current relationship with others, and (b) avoid the mistakes that bring about this failure, even before starting a new relationship.

Most experts in the field of marriage and relationship counseling agree that rigid formulae cannot be applied in the behavioral sciences. This means that every case has to be treat-

ed individually. But even though we know that one solution does not work for everyone, I can promise you this: If you follow the guidelines in this book and apply them diligently to your situation, you will notice a marked improvement in your relationship with your chosen partner.

Guided by Society

Some members of the upcoming generation may not agree with certain customs and practices in today's society, but they are aware that it is very difficult to ignore them.

One such custom is the practice of marriage. We grow up believing it's best for society if we all get married and live happily ever after. According to an article in *The New York Times*,⁹ marriage lengthens life and substantially boosts physical and emotional health. Also, statistics show married couples produce more income than people who are divorced or living together.

From our earliest childhood, most cultures in our society have taught us that when we grow up, getting married is the proper thing to do. Why? Because the interest of society is best served when as many people as possible get married and stay married. Economics is a major factor. People who choose the stability of marriage and family life usually strive to produce more income together, which results in more overall productivity. Also, producing new generations ensures continuation of the society.

So by the time most people become young adults, they have already accepted that one of their major goals is to find a suitable partner so they can continue in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents. They are therefore on a constant lookout for such a person.

If they have not found a marriage partner by a reasonable age, they are pressured by people around them to accelerate the

process. Women are usually more anxious than men and more so at an earlier age because, as the saying goes, “their biological clocks may be ticking.” This means they may be approaching a stage in their lives when they may no longer be able to produce children because their reproductive system no longer works.

But whether or not people choose to accept their parents’ traditions, one thing is certain: Most people are not meant to live their lives alone. Almost everyone (except hermits) needs at least one person with whom to share his or her life. And whether it is marriage or another form of cohabitation, it is reasonable to assume that relationships are here to stay. If traditional concepts of relationships are no longer workable, as we have seen, people must develop new strategies that are more suitable to our changing society.

However, changes do not occur overnight. The lessons learned from our parents (and they from their parents) are well entrenched in our psyches and would take some doing to alter. So in addition to learning the new skills, we also face the task of unlearning what has already been taught. The process is not complicated but it needs effort and dedication if we are to succeed.

PART 1

Choosing the One







CHAPTER ONE

Let's start from the beginning

Before you enter into a long-term relationship in which you expect to succeed, you have to be satisfied that you are ready to make a commitment. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. You must be able to look at yourself in the mirror and say, "Yes this is someone I would definitely like to know better." By no means should you begin a relationship from a position of self-doubt, low self-esteem, desperation, or uncertainty. You must decide what you want and know you are capable of achieving your desires. How can you do this?

Whether you are a man or a woman, or you are entering a relationship for the first time, or you have been involved before and would like to try again, become fully aware of who you are and what you want out of life. As you do, you will better be able to understand why you feel the way you do and the reasons for your behavior. With this understanding of yourself, you have the necessary information and freedom to make changes and create the life you want. On the other hand, if you do not know who you are, it would be impossible to make changes if necessary.

What do you want?

In our subconscious mind, most of us know what we truly want, but getting caught up in life's dramas and outside influences

causes us to lose sight of our true desires and needs. Sometimes we are uncertain of the true motivation for our actions. Are you asking, “Am I doing this because I want to or because I think I should?”

Now that you are considering a relationship, here’s how to identify your wants. Find a quiet place where you can sit by yourself. Make sure that you are not interrupted. Take a few minutes to reflect on your life up to this moment. Think about things you have done (your successes and your failures), and things you enjoy as well as those that were not pleasant. Ask yourself:

- ◆ Why do I want a relationship?
- ◆ Is it because I am lonely?
- ◆ Is it because all my friends are married and I am not?
- ◆ Do I feel incomplete without a partner?
- ◆ Do I feel that I am growing older and that life may pass me by?

With a pen and a sheet of paper, write down why you feel that you want a relationship. (Note: This is also for people already in a relationship who want to move forward and be more committed.)

Positive reasons for entering a relationship

1. People who are satisfied with their achievements and are happy with who they are usually experience a strong urge to share their lives with someone. If you’ve seen the movie “Mahogany” starring Diana Ross and Billy D. Williams, you may remember how Billy D made this point clear when Diana Ross was prepared to put everything on the line to become a famous fashion model. He said, “Success means nothing if you don’t

have someone you love to share it with.” When you feel you possess an abundance of good things in your life, you begin to think, “I can’t wait to find my loving equal with whom I can eventually create a family... a family that can benefit from everything I have learned and accomplished.”

2. In the company of someone with whom you share true love and intimacy, you can be yourself. You can relax knowing you can confront your strengths and weaknesses, make mistakes, and not be judged adversely.

3. Learning is a continuing process, and a satisfying relationship provides twenty-four hours a day of constant interactive training. There is great hope for success when two people join together in a commitment to experience growth together for them.

Are you ready?

Before you begin your search for a potential partner, be sure of the following:

- ◆ That you truly love yourself.
- ◆ That you put behind you all past issues and shed all emotional baggage.
- ◆ That you’re honest in evaluating yourself so you know your strengths and weaknesses.

Loving yourself

Of all the factors vitally important in creating lasting love relationships, I believe self-esteem is the most important. Knowing who you perceive yourself to be and how you feel about yourself are critical when it comes to long-term happiness. Everyone on this earth is here for a reason. Yes, you can always find someone more attractive, better educated or more financially secure than

you are, but they can never have the privilege of being you. You possess qualities and attributes many may envy if they get the chance to know the real you. Give them that chance.

People who feel good about themselves radiate a powerful message. They know they are entitled to the best there is to offer and are not prepared to accept any less. This attitude offers a challenge to any prospective relationship candidate you come in contact with. It requires them to put their best foot forward in their dealings with you. Subsequently, they will feel a sense of achievement when they ultimately succeed in living up to your expectations.

Unfortunately, many people find it difficult to accept themselves for who they are. Sometime in their childhood, they acquired the belief that they would have to change many things in their lives if they are to be loved by others. This universal problem has been the cause of great unhappiness for many people.

Remember the old saying, “If we do not love ourselves, we cannot love anyone else.” This still holds true, but it is also true that it is almost impossible to believe someone can love us if we do not love ourselves. How many times have we seen relationships suffer because one partner searches for reasons why his or her mate showers love and devotion on him/her? These partners cannot believe they’re loved for themselves, they believe they’re being deceived and their true motives will come out one of these days. They are convinced they are not worthy of their partner’s love.

Dr Nathaniel Branden, in his excellent book *The Psychology of Romantic Love*, explains this phenomenon. He notes that the overwhelming majority of humans suffer from some level of self-esteem deficiency. Deep down in their psyche, they feel unworthy of love. These are not necessarily conscious beliefs. On the surface, it appears they feel entitled to be loved; they may

even say “I deserve to be loved.” But deep negative feelings lurk in the background, sabotaging their efforts to achieve fulfillment.¹⁰

The good news is that behavioral therapists have devised methods to assist people in eliminating these deep entrenched psychological beliefs of inferiority. When you love yourself the way you are, you will give yourself permission to act in your own interest. You will not feel guilty for expecting a satisfying relationship because you'll feel that you deserve it. It's almost a self-fulfilling prophecy: When you expect it, it will happen.

Leaving past issues behind

Ending a relationship could be a traumatic experience, and sometimes it seems impossible to recover from the pain. Sooner or later however we have to come to the realization that life goes on and so must we.

There are many painful questions to consider, one of which is “What went wrong?” Finding the answers to this question helps put past issues to rest and prepares the way for a new beginning.

Attempting to start a new relationship without coming to terms with the reasons for the failure of your previous ones presents the following problems:

- ◆ You are likely to experience similar problems in a new relationship.
- ◆ You will not be emotionally available to commit to a new partner because you will believe you can be hurt again.
- ◆ The anger you carry within you will continually work against you, sabotaging every genuine effort you attempt to find new happiness.

Sometimes letting go of past hurt is much more difficult

than expected, because you may not understand the reasons for the problem. This makes you angry and this anger, though not a positive force, keeps you connected to your past relationship.

Consider this scenario. You finally decided to end a relationship because you feel your mate was not giving you what you wanted out of the relationship. The tough part is that he is a wonderful person and you know he truly loves you-at times even more than you love him. The only problem is that sometimes he does certain things he knows are hurtful to you. You say, "I'm sure he knows because I've brought it to his attention many times." Now that he is gone, you cannot stop thinking about him, you cannot understand why he could not be loving to you all the time. It makes you angry because it is clear he had what you needed but refused to give it to you. Why couldn't he? Why didn't he? It is difficult to discard such great memories and becomes even more so when you mentally interact with the kind, caring side of a person you still love.

Yes, it is difficult, but you must be able to shed this anger, resentment, and uncertainty to move on. How do you do this?

First, remember that people are the way they are and it's almost impossible to change them. When you commit to a partner (let's say your partner is male), you are in fact agreeing to accept him with all of his shortcomings. These shortcomings are usually easier to live with in the earlier stages of the relationship because you believe his positive side alone is enough to sustain the relationship. Perhaps his love for you will cause him to change and become more to your liking. However, as time passes, certain flaws in his behavior begin to bother you. Usually these are the same traits, which you ignored at the beginning of the relationship. Yes, you ignored them and now they are back to haunt you. Many times you wonder, "How can someone be so kind at some times and so inconsiderate at other times?" You dis-

cuss the matter many times, but the situation does not change.

Understand and accept that at no time your partner intended to hurt you. Even when you felt he was not doing what you believe he should do, he was always doing the best he could. Maybe his upbringing causes him to act in a certain way, or maybe he has certain psychological problems he doesn't understand. So as far as he knows, he is doing OK. You know this because you are certain he loves you and would give you the moon and stars if he could. So take the good with the bad. Your partner has both; the good side was wonderful, the bad side was rotten. You could not accept this so you decided to leave. End of story.

Now you can put this behind you because you understand it's not fair to be angry with your partner. It was not his fault. You cannot, however, deny how wonderful he was and how much he loved you and maybe still does. This part of the relationship you cannot discard. There will always be a place in your heart for good memories. Treasure this love; use it as a reference point for the kind of love you will seek in the future.

Every time you think about your "ex" and focus on your wonderful connection with him, you may feel the urge to return to the relationship, but you don't. You wouldn't because you remember your reasons for leaving and understand that the situation would most likely never change. But now you are free, free from anger and resentment towards your "ex." And now that you have closed this door, you are free to take the steps in creating the satisfying relationship you want and deserve.

Take these steps to get your "ex" out of your mind:

1. Make a clean break.

Once you have made a decision that the relationship is not working, don't waste any more time. Leave immediately. Being

with your “ex” has become a habit and you already know that habits are hard to break. So don’t call. Don’t accept calls. Stick with your decision; you had good reasons for making it. Don’t be misled by ego trips. People hate rejection, and even though your “ex” might know there is no good reason for continuing the relationship, he may try to get you back only because you rejected him. Do not fall into this trap.

2. Make a “fault list.”

After a break up, most people focus on the good times they spent together with their ex partner. The bad times are often forgotten. Make a complete list of all the mean and unpleasant things your “ex” did to you. Keep this list handy. Whenever you feel nostalgic about returning to your “ex,” you can refer to the list.

3. Get back on the horse.

It’s difficult to even consider a new relationship immediately after a break up. You must, however, make a special effort to start dating as soon as possible. You may not find someone immediately who fits your ideals. But get out and circulate, meet new people. You don’t have to get serious with anyone; casual dating will take your mind off of your “ex.” Be very careful. It is so easy to fall for someone when you are in this vulnerable state. If you find yourself feeling closer to someone soon after a break up, make sure you are not mistaken. One way to do this is to stop seeing that person for a while. Go on other dates. If it’s “the real thing,” you will know.

Shedding emotional beliefs

Many people go through life with unresolved emotional issues. This means that sometime in their lives, perhaps from their childhood, an emotional trauma prevents them from moving forward. In the majority of cases, the people are not consciously aware of their emotional state, causing them to make the same mistakes over and over again.

Most people start out with the best intentions in their relationships. They seem to know what they want and what they must do to reach their goals. They consciously set out to do what they believe is right for them, but somehow end up doing things not in their best interest. For example, you may say, "I know that I need a mate who will be kind and considerate to me," or "I will not date another married man, or anyone else that is not free to commit to me." Yes, you say this, but you end up with a mate who turns out to be abusive or cannot make a serious commitment to you.

Why does this happen? Psychologists have proven conclusively that human behavior is governed by a deep belief system held on a subconscious level. This belief system was acquired in early childhood when we first received important information about life. This information is stored deep in our subconscious minds and represents our "true beliefs." Whatever beliefs we may subsequently acquire usually do not erase our original "true beliefs." So, even when new knowledge and experience guides us to act in a way that seems logical, the subconscious takes over. If what seems logical is different from these *true beliefs*, our actions prove to be different.¹¹

Consider people who decide to quit smoking. Every day they read about thousands of people who are suffering from lung cancer and other diseases caused by smoking. They say, "It's insane to continue to sabotage my health. I must stop this. I am going to quit." But within the hour, you see them lighting up another cigarette.

Past traumatic experiences

People who have been betrayed by a close friend or family member, mentally or physically abused by a former mate, or have suffered some other emotional traumas in their lives may find it difficult to trust or commit to anyone again. Sometimes no mat-

ter how much we try, we cannot put these unfortunate experiences behind us. In some cases we may not be able to put our finger on the causes of the problem. All we know is that we go into it believing that “this one will work.” But we come out saying all men/women are the same: no good, cannot be trusted, selfish, and so on.

If this applies to you, you may be well advised to seek some kind of professional help. There are many qualified professionals who can assist if necessary. Contact your local Chamber of Commerce for more information. Or ask your family doctor to recommend a competent therapist with whom you can privately and confidentially discuss your personal situation.

Know your strengths and weaknesses

Take a good hard honest look at yourself. What have you got to offer a potential partner? Unfortunately, we live in a world where you are judged initially by superficial things. The way you carry yourself, your physical appearance, the value of your home, and your status in the community are all criteria most people use for attractiveness. These superficial attributes may be important for initial attraction, but after this, a person wants to know, “What is he/she really made of?”

So, when considering a new relationship, be realistic in evaluating yourself. How do others see you? Many people believe that, on an eligibility scale of 1 to 10, they rate number 11, then wonder why their phone is not ringing off the hook with date invitations.

There is a great difference between who you are and who you would like to be. Sometimes you can mislead others as to who you really are, especially when meeting for the first time. Usually, it's not your intention to mislead others, but attempting to put your best foot forward can send out mixed signals.

This is one of the principal causes of failure in many relationships. You become attracted to someone because you believe that “what you see is what you get,” only to be disappointed later when you get to know the person better.

A good way to truthfully evaluate yourself is to pretend that you are describing yourself to someone. List all of the characteristics you believe best describe you. After you have this list, ask a few close friends to prepare a similar list describing you. You then compare their list with yours. Show your friends your list and ask them individually if they agree with your assessment of yourself. It would be very interesting to hear their assessment of you. Friends are usually not brutally honest, but nevertheless, you will have a good indication of how you are perceived by others.

Questions that determine your eligibility

1. **Are you a person of good character?** It's easy to confuse personality traits with character. Your passion for the finer things in life, your ability to light up the party, your soft touch are attractive personality traits, but your character will determine the success or failure of your relationship. Character is what you are made of, your upbringing, your respect for others, and how you react under stress all indicate your readiness to deal with the multitude of complications inevitable in a relationship.

2. **Do have high integrity.** Knowing that a partner will never willfully lie or mislead you produces a tremendous feeling of security. Honesty and trustworthiness are essential to any successful relationship. When a partner is always honest with you, trust becomes natural. This automatically eliminates many problems that kill relationships, such as, the fear of extramarital affairs. Imagine living in constant fear that your partner may not be truthful with you all the time. You will be in a constant state of nervousness and apprehension. In this state, it is almost impossible to maintain intimacy and passion.

Honesty and integrity is a part of character that does not change easily. Usually when a partner betrays you, you are devastated. You cannot believe someone so close could possibly do such dreadful things. However, if you were to consider the matter carefully, you would realize that a person of high integrity would not normally act in this fashion. You are then faced with the realization that your partner lacked integrity from the beginning.

3. Are you committed to personal growth? Someone who is ready and willing to learn as much as he/she can about themselves with the intention of making improvements where possible is a good candidate for a successful relationship. Such commitment to personal growth and improvement guarantees a better relationship because it avoids some of the primary causes of failure in a love union between two people. An example is power struggles, when two people fight desperately to prove that one is right and the other is wrong. Sometimes one partner can see the need for improvement while the other stays in denial.

You need a mate who knows that every relationship experiences rough spots and is ready to work with you to find solutions when faced with a problem. Before you commit to someone, it is important to determine how committed he/she is to self-improvement. Many people fail to determine this at the beginning, only to find out in a time of crisis that their partner is too stubborn to read a book on relationships, listen to self-development tapes, or seek professional assistance. Commitment to personal growth and improvement is probably the single most important ingredient in a relationship. If either you or your partner lacks this commitment, it is very unlikely your relationship will survive.

4. Are you a mature and responsible person? Let's face it, not everyone is ready to enter a committed relationship. You may

possess many great qualities as a person and be capable of loving someone, but you need a certain level of maturity to sustain a lasting relationship. Maturity in this case does not refer to age. Many women tell me they always seek older men because they are usually more mature. This may be true in some cases, but the high number of unsuccessful second and third marriages proves that age alone does not guarantee maturity. A mature person is grown up enough to know that each individual and no one else is responsible for his or her own life. Each person must be able to:

- ◆ Provide the necessary financial resources to support themselves.
- ◆ Be conscious of and able to maintain good health habits.
- ◆ Be able to feed themselves, which includes being able to prepare their own meals if necessary.

This does not mean you cannot seek assistance or share responsibilities, but the ultimate accountability is yours. One of the reasons parents do not put a large burden of responsibility on children is because they are not mature enough to accept it. Mature adults, on the other hand are expected to exhibit some form of responsibility, meaning, they do what they say they will do. They are accountable for their actions and decisions, regardless of the consequences.

It is easy to determine if someone is responsible. A person who is always late for appointments, always has a good excuse for being out of a job, or always needs to be taken care of by someone is not ready to accept responsibility. Such a person may be nice to have as a casual friend, but may prove difficult to live with as a love partner.

One characteristic that identifies a successful relationship is the feeling of security experienced by both partners. This kind

of security comes with knowing you can count on your partner's support in a time of need. It is refreshing to find someone with whom you can share all the wonderful things life has to offer and who has the same enthusiasm as you. You also want someone who stands by your side in a time of emergency, during illness, and through stressful situations.

Most people who possess the characteristics mentioned above are in high demand in the world of relationships. Many refer to them as prime marriage/relationship material.

If you can answer yes to the four categories of questions listed above, you can place yourself high on the scale of eligibility for lifelong relationships.

Eligible but still single

Joanne is a 33-year-old pharmacist who has never been married. "Where did all the good guys go?" she asks. "I have been dating men for the past three years and still can't find one whom I consider worthwhile. My friends suggest I may be setting my standards too high and perhaps I should consider compromising. But most of the men I meet do not even come close to what I am looking for. I feel I have a lot to offer to the right man, if only I can find him."

I have interviewed many young women who find themselves in a similar situation. These women have chosen to pursue careers instead of opting for early marriage and perhaps motherhood. These women have achieved economic and personal independence; they are now in a position to exercise some measure of control over their lives. They feel ready to find an equal partner with whom they can share their lives.

These women say that finding a man who meets their criteria has not been easy. However, at a closer look, the situation for these women may be even more complicated than it might appear.

Finding an equal

Modern women continue to speak out against what they see as male domination resulting from an uneven role balance between the partners in a relationship. They are no longer prepared to accept the role of a traditional wife. So they seek a mate with whom they can share an equal partnership. But here's the problem. While growing up, many women heard these words from their mothers: "Never marry a man you cannot look up to." That refers to a man who is more than an equal; perhaps more intelligent, more ambitious, and more socially established.

So even though a woman may truly want to find an equal, her lifelong training and her need to be socially accepted influences her selection. She may hold out for the kind of man that would meet her mother's approval. Of course, some women get tired of waiting and select a man of their own choice. This works out fine for many women, but others may go through a period of torment by guilt for what they see as letting their mothers down.

However, if the woman chooses to hold out for her ideal man, i.e., the one she could look up to, she may remain single for a long period. Why? Because most men who fit such profiles fall into a few categories and are usually in short supply. For example, let's refer to him as type 'A'; a well adjusted, self-confident, and progressive man who actually wants an equal love partner. Such a man may not feel comfortable in a relationship in which his woman believes she has to look up to him. Unbelievable as it may seem, such men do exist but are not easy to find.

Then there is Type 'B'; the man who feels he has earned the right to have a beautiful woman at his side, a trophy wife. This is the type that some societies label "a good catch" and who himself believes he is God's special gift to women. Such a man

would probably run in the opposite direction when he encounters an ambitious and independent woman who demonstrates she is clearly in control of her life.

Women who have been able to side-step the traditional rules and successfully chart their own destiny should congratulate themselves. They have indeed earned the right to be picky when it comes to selecting the person with whom to share their lives.

The time has come to reinvent new standards for relationships, standards that will be more suitable to the needs of a new generation. The traditional concepts of relationships have served their purpose, but are now outdated even though society still clings to them. Imagine our parents may still believe that a man who does not have a regular job is not a good catch for their daughter. Most people know that many other avenues exist today and one can achieve economic stability without having a steady job.

In the 1991 hit movie “Father of the Bride,” Steve Martin who played the father became disturbed when he learned that Annie his daughter (Kimberly Williams) was about to marry Bryan (George Newbern), an independent communications consultant. Even when Annie explained that her fiancée gets contracts with various companies, he was still not impressed. Why didn’t Bryan have a permanent job? Only after Annie explained that Bryan was such a high-priced consultant that no one company could afford to keep him on their permanent staff was her father relieved.

Old customs and traditions die hard. But the time has come when we have to find ways of shedding old beliefs and setting new standards that meet current individual needs. The beliefs of the older generation have served them well. However, what was right for them may not be right for generations that follow. It’s

necessary to create new rules to solve the new problems of today.

You, more than anyone else, must know if someone is right for you. Ignore the fantasies and old fairy tales; create new ones that suit you better. Instead of waiting to be swept off your feet, keep your feet firmly planted on the ground.