

Relationship Red Flags

Too often “love is blind” in the early stages. Step back to take a more objective view of your relationship to see if any of these commonly over-looked “red flags” are present.

1. An indifference or hostility towards God and faith.

- ◆ Marriage is a spiritual relationship. Healthy spouses respect each other’s faith and share faith together, building a shared spirituality that includes prayer.
- ◆ The faith dimension is the foundation for truth, love, commitment and sacrifice for the good of each other.
- ◆ Indifference or hostility toward God or faith in marriage is like having a home without a sound foundation or car with no engine.

2. Angry, controlling or jealous behavior

- ◆ Attempts to control a partner’s feelings, actions, dress, or friendships signal low trust and lead to power struggles.
- ◆ Angry outburst, threats or sullen withdrawal are behaviors which hurt people and damage relationships.
- ◆ In order to thrive, each partner needs their own space and autonomy. Healthy intimacy develops the security for both closeness and separateness and allows the marriage relationship to grow.
- ◆ A sense of equality and mutuality in sharing power characterizes healthy relationships.

3. Refusal to address relationship issues

- ◆ Denial or avoidance of problems will only allow them to worsen over time
- ◆ Healthy couples trust each other enough to disagree and seek win-win solutions.
- ◆ Wise couples develop their relationship skills and seek professional help when needed.

4. Premarital sex and cohabitation with no commitment

- ◆ Contrary to conventional wisdom, this is not the way to discover compatibility but is the way toward marital instability and unhappiness.
- ◆ Truly knowing, trusting, reliability and commitment are the foundation for great physical intimacy in marriage. (see: www.nojerks.com)

5. Addictive behaviors i.e. drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling, cyber-sex

- ◆ Any addiction becomes the primary relationship for the addict and will destroy a marriage.
- ◆ Addictive behaviors lead to “stinking thinking,” deceit, minimizing and denying of the real problem in the addict and anger, resentment, hurt, fear, “craziness” in the codependent.
- ◆ Seek professional help for any addiction.

6. Forcing choices between “me and the children”

- ◆ Common reaction when a step-parent feels in the “left-out” position.
- ◆ This is a false choice that creates “win-lose” scenarios.
- ◆ Find ways to support the partner’s parenting responsibilities.
- ◆ Take time to understand the feelings and experience of (step) children towards this remarriage. Include them in the wedding as they are willing.
- ◆ Make sure to take time as a couple to nurture your marriage.

7. Unwillingness to mourn losses and forgive

- ◆ Remarriage is born from loss for at least one of the partners.
- ◆ Losses, both death and divorce, must be mourned. If not, a person will not be emotionally free to commit deeply to a new relationship. The new partner will bear the brunt of the pain of unmourned and unforgiven losses.
- ◆ It is normal to experience feelings of loss during courtship and at anniversaries.
- ◆ Forgiveness benefits the forgiver first by setting them free from hurt, anger, hatred. It is an ongoing process.

8. Arrogance, lack of empathy or unwillingness to help or encourage partner

- ◆ Married partners are “helpmates” to each other.
- ◆ Learn how to ask for and offer help to each other.
- ◆ Basic kindness, courtesy, respect and manners are prerequisites.
- ◆ Person who lacks empathy will not be credible helpmate.

9. Little or no social support

- ◆ Supportive family and friends are predictors of stronger marriage.
- ◆ Nurture and build a support network of family, friends, other couples and parish

10. He/She brings out my “less than best” self.

- ◆ Over time, healthy marriages bring out the better or best in the other.
- ◆ Partners treat each other with acceptance, love and patience toward human flaws.
- ◆ Immoral, illegal, selfish or harmful behaviors are not tolerated.

These red flags often occur in clusters. Address them proactively before marrying. Consider postponing a wedding date until they are addressed. They will not go away. Seek professional help as needed as many if not most issues can be remedied if both are willing to work on solutions together.