

Make Friends with Time

Far too often I meet couples who are getting married without having sufficient time to know each other or to develop a meaningful relationship before marriage. They feel they love each other and that's all they need. Love, love, love. Is love enough? The reality is they are sexually involved and sex is always sweet even if the hearts are not sweet. It's difficult to distinguish the difference if you are moving too fast and sexually involved. Rushing into marriage is a recipe for disaster.

There are some people who get married quickly because they do not want to have sex before marriage but they are so sexually hot, so they rush in to marriage just to have "legal" sex. The problem is sex does not prove you love each other or that love will last. It only proves one thing—your sex organs are working. However, it does not prove they will continue to work after marriage. That's serious. Both of these extremes are dangerous: rushing because you are involved or rushing to avoid prematurely being involved, are dangerous. This is why you must make friends with time. Time is a most important ingredient in a healthy, budding relationship. One of my favorite authors says this in making a balance between the two: "make haste slowly."

HOW MUCH TIME?

How much time a couple really needs before getting married? Ten years ago I shared that "From the time a couple can say they are seriously in love to the time of marriage, it should be at **least one year**. It is even better when courtship lasts for about **two** to three years, which includes an engagement period of about six months to a year. Why do I say at least a year? Both individuals in a romantic relationship need to know about each other's personal values, family traditions and rituals along with cultural differences. I have observed that the best way for this to happen is to allow at least one year for the relationship. This would permit individuals to know each other's expectations and practices during birthdays, thanksgiving, Christmas, summer and winter vacations, etc. One can be as smart as Voltaire or talkative as Jerry Lewis, but unless these events and rituals are experienced together before marriage an unwise decision might be made. You might discover irreconcilable differences too late.

In addition, this time would test the effect of disappointment, tension, arguments, opposition, sadness and joy, forgiveness, unconditional love and the onset of uncontrollable desires. Do not cut yourself short of the joys of courtship. Enjoy the thrills of loving someone before you say, "I do." In other words, one would want some fundamental questions answered before that final decision is made. Questions like: "What are some of the social activities my friend likes to do to entertain himself/herself? Do they seriously conflict with my own views and practices of social entertainment?" "What are my friends' family expectation of me? Am I expected to attend every Christmas dinner, every birthday party, every thanks giving dinner, no matter what?" There are many more questions about finance, family size, etc., I can present here but space would not allow it. Some of these you can only talk about, but there are others you must have the time to experience together.

LIVING TOGETHER TOO SOON

A very common thing couples do is living together long before there is any understanding about each other or the relationship. This is a big mistake. After meeting each other on Tuesday, by Monday of the next week or at the end of the month they are living together. They start living like a married couple but they are not married. It is a very confusing situation. Research tells us that co-habiting before marriage is not really an advantage and can often be unhealthy. More so, living together too soon in the unmarried relationship distorts the possibility of making an objective decision about the relationship. Sometimes females view the relationship different than the men and gets jealous when he talks to other women. Still there are some women who would be having sex for the first time thinking it will be a long or permanent relationship. When things go terrible in the relationship she is depressed and troubled because she does not want to have sex with another person. Her dreams are shattered. On the other hand, he does not understand what the problem is all about.

I wish more of our single young and older persons would take the time in developing relationships. You have nothing to lose. I like what writer Paul Hudson says in his article “In Defense Of Taking It Slow: Why You Shouldn't Rush Into Love.” “It's not a race. I know that this person is the only thing that you want; he/she is all you think about and yearn for. That's a good sign, but take it slow. If you treat love like a race, you're treating it like something that can be won — and owned. If you treat love like a race, then there must be a finish line. And then what? You're onto the next race? Love is something that needs to be maintained and constantly recreated. . . A race always has a winner and a loser. Love is different. In love, you win and lose together. Love shouldn't be rushed because it's not about an end goal. . . Love is not a game. It's not a race. It's not a collectible. Love is life. It's not meant to be kept in your pocket; it's meant to be lived. Don't rush; just do.”

GREAT REASONS TO SLOW DOWN

In conclusion, here are a few good reasons not to rush in to a relationship by eHarmony's writer Fran Creffield:

1. It may be lust rather than love: “The two can feel very similar in the early stages, resulting in a single minded obsession with the object of your desire. The main difference between them is that lust is often fleeting and can move from one person to another very quickly.”
2. Is it a reaction to the past?: “Some people rush into a new relationship in an attempt to get over an old one. It's like they have a hole in their life that they're desperate to fill. Rebound relationships rarely stand the test of time because until your heart has healed from the past there isn't room for someone new to come in.”
3. You may be being swept along: “If a match seems completely besotted with you from the outset it's very flattering. We all want to hear that we're wonderful and bring happiness and joy to another person's life. The romantic dream of love at first sight is enticing, but in reality if you've only been seeing someone for a few weeks the chances are that they don't know 'you' well enough to know that they 'love' you. Often very early professions of love reveal a desperate need to be loved in the other person. Believing you could be 'the one' that they have been waiting for all their life for may seduce you into saying you feel the same even if you don't. Be true to yourself rather than mirroring the other person's feelings, that way you will stay grounded and safe.”
4. You may burn bridges: “It's common for a new love interest to become all-consuming and many people let other parts of their life slide as they devote all their time and attention to their new relationship. This is a really bad strategy. Dates may come and go but your family and friends are the ones who are there for the long haul and you need to treat them well.”
5. You may end up giving too much too soon: “If there's always biscuits in the biscuit tin most people will eventually go off biscuits. The same is true with relationships that go straight into daily contact and 24/7 availability. Hold something back and leave your date wanting more of you rather than less. Avoid spending whole weekends together, jumping into bed too quickly or being constantly online 24/7.”

Remember, take time to love. Time is your best friend.

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