

## What is Engagement in a Romantic Relationship?

What is engagement in a romantic relationship? Engagement is a date to get married. To expand further, engagement is an agreement to marry someone, and with a targeted date set when the ceremony will take place. Here is another way to look at it. Engagement is a scheduled appointment, emotional commitment, or active participation in an activity. There is no engagement without a date to marry.

During the engagement period, it is time to prepare for the wedding day and the lifelong journey of marriage. If you have not started planning, then you are not engaged. If you say you are engaged, and there is no date to marry, then you are actually engaged to be engaged. The engaged-to-be-engaged stage can be confusing and emotionally painful, especially for the one who is expecting someone else to set the date to marry. Those lovely ladies who were so thrilled to receive a beautiful engagement ring worth hundreds or thousands of dollars, but has no date to marry, are being placed in a very difficult situation.

There are too many females who are anxiously waiting for their partner to ask, “Will you marry me?” and they gleefully say yes, but there is no decision on when they will get married. She sits impatiently for weeks, months, and oftentimes years, waiting for the man to decide on the date. This is a major misunderstanding about engagement and the role of the man in the process.

Many women still believe it is utterly wrong to propose to their men. So they sit and wait, burning inside with the embers of anticipation, then doubt and frustration. They refuse to initiate the discussion of a date to marry. Nervously, they sit in this deep abyss of hoping, waiting, and then immense emotional pain. All she needs to do is propose a date by saying, “Honey, let’s get married in September this year.” If he is dubious or gets angry at the suggestion, then you need to get out of the relationship.

The good news is that there are many couples who mutually decide on a date to marry. There is no grand announcement, expensive party, or anticipatory grief that the relationship might end. While it is not wrong for a man to propose to his bride-to-be, he must only do so when the following are in place. 1) They are both physically and emotionally mature adults who can make independent decisions. 2) They are financially stable and self-sufficient. 3) There is nothing hindering the decision to get married within a year after the proposal.

Some men would give a “promissory ring” to show their serious commitment to marriage, but with no plans to follow through on the engagement and get married. If one has to wait until the house is finished being built and there is no down payment saved to get the mortgage to build the house, that will drag the relationship down a slippery slope of hoping, waiting, anticipating, then intense tears and anger. As stated earlier, do not get engaged until you are sure you can decide to marry within one year.

The engagement period is intended to be a short time, lasting six months to a year, as the couple prepares for the wedding day. There might be exceptions of up to eighteen months of engagement. However, my experience has shown me that when engagement goes beyond one year, the relationship starts becoming stale, cold, and drab. Often, routine and complacency cripples the couple's growth towards a happy marriage.

When a relationship is on a healthy pathway, "Will you marry me?" is not really a question in application. It is a statement of affirmation. Both individuals would have been happily anticipating this time as they discussed the "What if we get married?" question. Before even deciding to get married, they would be talking about future plans, children, education, business, career paths, family, social life, personal desires, wishes, etc. They would be growing into a healthy emotional entanglement; gradually weaving the tapestry of enjoyment, lifelong togetherness, and happiness. Hence, if there is no response to "Will you marry me?", the question remains a question and not a statement of affirmation.

It is important to understand that when there is a healthy approach to "Will you marry me?" the response, which is normally "Yes, I do," would also mean "Will you marry me?" It is a reciprocal, anticipatory romantic response to future plans together.

I must state here that the dating or courting period only needs to last one year before deciding to marry. Then the couple can get married within six months to a year after that. You do not need three or five years to get to know someone. A year is needed to discover traditions, expectations, family, personal wishes, etc.

There are too many individuals who are being burnt out and seriously emotionally wounded due to the false concept of engagement. I encourage females to be involved in the romantic process with their partner. Avoid promises that have no end to them. The man is not in charge of your destiny. You are. Find a man who can move with you through the stages of growing, loving, engaging, and marrying. Then you will be happy.

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