

CAN THIS BE LOVE?

WHEN THE SUBJECT IS RELATIONSHIPS, don't believe everything you read

Herewith, a compendium of the current wisdom regarding relationships—along with one responsible opposing viewpoint.

1. Marriage should be a fifty-fifty proposition.

This notion quickly breaks down when your 50 percent entails total financial support while your partner devotes himself to his "career" of performing at medieval lute recitals, and his 50 percent involves not expecting a hot meal every night.

2. Communication is everything.

This concept is only half true. Communi-

cation is essential when you have something to tell your partner, but it is often quite trivial when he has something to say to you. For instance, it's important for you to communicate to him your pressing need for a new coat this winter. But should you be forced to listen to a long, convoluted explanation of the ethics behind his decision to change his career from computer software salesman to Peace Corps volunteer?

3. Sex isn't everything.

Most marital experts today agree with this statement; most men don't. Generally, men agree that the only thing more important than sex is—not getting it.

4. It's very important to give each other space.

This used to be known as "absence makes the heart grow fonder," in which guise it was no less idiotic. In general, giving a man space is like giving a dog a typewriter. The chances are he will not use it wisely.

5. Real commitment has nothing to do with "a piece of paper."

This is undoubtedly true when the piece of paper in question is a gum wrapper, or your diploma from typing school. Otherwise, see the case of Michelle Triola vs. Lee Marvin, California, 1979.

6. A modern relationship requires dropping old-fashioned sex roles.

This is both a good and bad idea: It's good if it entails getting your partner into the kitchen for reasons other than telling you what to do in it; it's bad if it means you are suddenly the one in charge of installing the smoke detectors and caulking the storm windows.

7. Infidelity can actually be good for a relationship.

This idea can safely be placed alongside such other pieces of undying wisdom as: "The earth is flat." Infidelity is about as beneficial to a relationship as one of the partner's contracting irritable bowel syndrome.

8. Couples should express their anger openly to each other.

This is unquestionably true, except when the partners involved tend to express their anger with meat cleavers, fireplace pokers and blunt instruments—or by slashing each other's wardrobes. If that's your situation, then it's probably wiser to express your anger covertly, perhaps by writing an anonymous letter detailing your partner's incompetence to his boss.

9. Maintaining separate, outside friendships can only benefit a relationship.

I used to agree with this concept, until I realized its fatal flaw. While my idea of outside friendships would include the pal I've had since kindergarten, my college roommate, and the colleague I've known since my first job, my partner's idea of outside friendships might mean the woman he was seeing when he met me, the divorcée who just moved in across the hall, or the Playboy bunny he met on the bus last week.

10. First and foremost, you and your partner should be friends.

This idea sounds good, until you begin to calculate how many of your friends you'd actually want to have sleeping next to you in bed, or which of your friends would look good escorting you to your younger sister's wedding, or who among your friends would be willing to pay your rent. . . .

11. In an egalitarian relationship, both partners' careers carry the same weight.

Yes, even though your partner might selfishly object to the two of you moving to another state to accommodate your career when you are making 39¢ per hour as a jewelry designer, and he is making \$100 an hour as a trial lawyer. So what? Just ask him this: Can a person wear a judicial opinion on the lapel of a silk blouse, or use a verdict to give the perfect accent to an understated outfit? Not likely, you'll be able to sneer.

12. Trust is the foundation of a good relationship.

Yes, certainly, as long as it's backed up with good surveillance equipment.



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