

A Pre-Marital Checklist

Are you entering the world of marriage? If yes, consider the questions, suggestions, tips and advice listed below. This list is intended to get you thinking about some of the most important aspects which play a key contributing role in shaping your marriage...your life. This is not an exhaustive list; nevertheless, it aims to focus on the main aspects.

1) What do you want from life? - It's important to be clear on what you want from life. One can never be fully prepared for marriage. But if you are clear on what you want from life, you will be able to choose/select a suitable life partner. Most of us don't know what we want from life. Over a period of time, the wrong choice of partner can leave one disillusioned, disappointed, unhappy and filled with a host of several other negative emotions; which in turn influences the rest of your life.

2) Are you willing to share your life? - Many people value their privacy and guard it with their life. In marriage, you should be willing to share your life. Of course, one still reserves the right to one's private thoughts and time. But in general, sharing is integral and core to marriage. So either you learn to share, or review the decision of when or with whom you want to enter into marriage.

3) Health - One's overall health plays a vital role in your married life. If you and your partner are endowed with good health, then this parameter is not a consideration at all. If one of you has a medical history which could potentially impact your married life in any way, it is important to be honest about the same before marriage. If both of you have health issues even prior to marriage, then you need to figure out a practical way to address them in the future or you may want to review whether you want to enter into marriage at all.

4) Day-to-day Living - One's day-to-day lifestyle and how you conduct yourself in public and private is an important ingredient in a successful marriage. It is important to understand the important elements and activities of your partner's everyday life before marriage. Simple things like What time does he/she sleep?, What are the few things that he/she should do every day?, What does he/she like to do regularly?, What are his/her food preferences?, etc. It is important for couples to discover that daily routine and equilibrium in a marriage. This, of course, means a few changes in your current lifestyle. But the most important question is, "Are you willing to make these changes for him/her?" - If yes, then in the long term you will

most likely be able to lead a happy married life. If not, then you probably want to review your choices and priorities.

5) Respect - Mutual respect is an important ingredient in marriage. And it has to be a two-way street. It is important to respect your partner's family, upbringing, past, preferences, choices, future plans, interests, friends, dreams, thoughts, emotions... And the thing about respect is you have got to earn it... No one can force you to genuinely respect another. If you are not able to respect each other before and through your marriage, then day-to-day life becomes stressful. You may want to consider how much stress you are willing to take!

6) Values - You need to be aware of each other's values and be able to revere them. You may not understand them fully, may not agree with them fully - but it is important to appreciate and support your spouse when the need arises. Also, if your partner's core value system is not aligned with your views, it is important to speak about it before marriage. Expecting your spouse to let go completely of his/her core values can be an unreasonable expectation; one which you want to review and discuss.

7) Finances - Your current financial situation, your financial contributions towards the home, your view towards every-day spending, your financial planning for the future has a significant impact on your married life. If you and your partner's views are extremely divergent on most aspects of finance, it is important to speak about it before marriage. At the end of the day, one of the most important variables in your life is your financial situation. Hence, it is important to have common/shared views on the major aspects of money - especially spending and saving.

8) Trust - Trust is one of the foundational elements in any relationship and one of the core ingredients to marriage. You need to be able to blindly trust your partner on many aspects as you sail through the journey of life. And the seeds of trust are usually sowed at the beginning of any relationship. So, one important question that you need to ask is "Do I trust him/her?"

9) Change - Change is fundamental to human nature as we experience life. And in marriage, it is important to be open to change, to change and to accept change. If your partner is closed to change, you need to critically ask yourself whether you would be willing to make all the changes in life?

And finally, are you happy with your partner? Do you look forward to spending time with each other, to meet each other, to talk to each other, to share with each other, to be with each other, to laugh with each other.... At the end of the day, we all want to be happy. And if your partner makes you happy, then you will probably end up blissfully married.

Ending with the Words of Wisdom:

- Marriage is a mixed bag - happiness, joys, togetherness, companionship, shared responsibilities, new experiences, rainbows, discovery, passions, gains, laughs, learning, acceptance, growth, change, new bonds and associations, re-calibration of expectations and a harbinger of a new life chapter; but also compromises, sacrifices, hard-work, sadness, worry, anxiety, stress, losses, tears, adjustments, letting-go....
- If you do decide to get married, then it is worthwhile to spend time observing and speaking to married people [ranging from newly married to a couple married for 50 years]. It will at least give you a realistic picture of what marriage is all about.
- Enter marriage with an open mind - open to yourself, open to your partner and lastly, open to the changes in life....