

Focus On Who And What You Want

Focus on who and what you want, Instead of focusing on who and what you don't want.

"It's a funny thing about life: If you refuse to accept anything but the very best, you will often get it." W. Somerset Maugham.

Are you focusing on who and what you want with a partner? Or are you focusing on who and what you don't want? Because, we do get exactly what we expect.

Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, famous author and Jungian analyst, created these 12 characteristics to seek in a long term partner. The 12 points are listed below, then I expanded upon them.

Here is a Guide for Conscious Choices in a Partner.

1. Kindness and Respect - The ___expression, "we should treat family like strangers and strangers like family," is indicative of the amount of disrespect that is tolerated in relationships. This attitude is a barrier to the basic building blocks of long-term goodwill and respect.
2. Ability To Learn: Curiosity - Although it is normal to have disagreements and power struggles, many couples fail to learn from conflicts and may repeat the same self destructive scenarios and behaviors for decades. We shouldn't talk unless we can improve on silence. As James Thurber noted, our tendency is to look back in anger or forward in fear, instead of "around in awareness."
3. Flexibility - Many people grew up in rigid families, with rigid roles. Consequently, it doesn't occur to them to let go of patterns that clearly aren't working.
4. Ability To Hear Your Pain - This is what often brings couples into therapy, because they have not learned to sit and listen to one another with empathy and compassion.
5. A Deep Inner Life On A Personal Journey - Often couples become too fused together, losing their individual joys and passions.
6. Similar Passions - (Ability to have many varied good times together) - Many couples lose their pleasure bond with each other, sharing mostly complaints and drudge.
7. Similar Values - Unfortunately we read too many "happily ever after" fairy tales, instead of understanding the importance of conscious negotiation of rules, roles, religion, and money issues, early-on in couple-hood.
8. Compassion - Many people learn "shame and blame" games in their family. They engage in rascal hunting and learn to use these behaviors in close relationships. Families fail to watch each other with "soft eyes," (Levine 1995) in order to address problem behaviors in a gentle manner without judgment about toward partners. Often a partner will take the "moral high ground" and lecture to the other about perceived inadequacies. Instead, of compassion shared between two equals, partners often relate to each other like they are parents of children.
9. Ability To Laugh At Ones Self - Because many people grew up in a shame-blame environment, it is difficult for them to look at themselves lightly.
10. Substance Abuse, Dishonesty, Cover-up - A lack of knowledge about substance abuse introduces a wild card into relationships. Also, dishonesty and cover-up cause a build-up of bad feelings, becoming "brown stamps." This can lead to what I call the "anchovy pizza" syndrome. In my practice I have seen countless couples who've saved "brown stamps" of bad feelings, until they are ready to cash them in at the break-up redemption center. In one such case, a woman saved book after book of bad feelings about her husband's inability to hear her needs. The last stamp was pasted when he ordered an anchovy pizza. She hated anchovies. Then, she announced, to his shock, that the pizza was the last food he'd ever order for her, because she wanted a divorce.
11. Ability To Be A Friend And Not Just A Lover - Passion without friendship in relationships, is like doing somersaults on a circus trapeze without a safety net.
12. Someone Who Makes Your Life Bigger, Not Smaller - Unfortunately, too many people grew up seeing family in terms of correction-city, drudge and duty. Consequently, they perceive commitment as a prison sentence, instead of a shared adventure.

Although, this is an easy list to memorize, the difficulty lays in breaking the patterns that prevent maintenance of our desired behaviors. Peggy Papp, a famous family therapist remarked that we come out of our own family of origin with a "cookie-cutter" approach to life and it requires "heroic moments" to change the shape of our own cookie-cutters.

Visualize your dream relationship several times a day and that will help to begin to change your cookie-cutter. Focus on who and what you want, instead of who and what you don't want. Only one person can defeat you in the endeavor, that person is you. Inner correction, creates outer correction.

Abraham Lincoln said, "Man is just about as happy as he makes up his mind to be."

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About the Author

Author, Dr. Linda Miles, is deeply committed to helping individuals and couples achieve rewarding relationships. She is an expert with a doctorate in Counseling Psychology, and has worked in the mental health field for over thirty years. She has been interviewed extensively on radio, TV, and in newspapers and magazines. Find more relationship ideas and relaxation techniques on her web site and in the award-winning book she co-authored, *The New Marriage: Transcending the Happily-Ever-After Myth*, and *Train Your Brain: For Successful Relationships*, CD. <http://www.drindamiles.com>

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