

Wondering if a new marriage will succeed? Read on

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In an ideal world young children observe that their parents have respect for each other. When disagreements arise their mother and father discuss their differences calmly and rationally. These children find that when one parent makes suggestions for proper behaviour they can anticipate that the other parent will have the same expectations for their behaviour. Without giving it too much thought over these early years the children are developing and observing a kind of hidden roadmap of how good marriages work.

Later as children get into their early teens they begin to develop new acquaintances and they become interested in friendships with people of the opposite sex. Often after a few tries at early and sometimes awkward dating they discover that young people from other parents have different ideas than what they have grown up to expect. Then if they are fortunate many of these young people will form a friendship with a partner who sees the world as they do. It will seem to them that a new partner will be just right for them. The new partner will fit the hidden road map that the child developed earlier. Although they have not given it much logical thought their new partner will cause them to serendipitously have a special eureka experience of joy and contentment. They will be in love!

Many of us don't have the luxury of ideal parents or of observing ideal marriages in our childhood. Yet there are certain activities that young adults can do to increase their chances of success in marriage. Here are a few thoughts from research and from my own observations from 64 years of happy marriage that may help:

*Ideal marriages occur most frequently when both partners have approximately equal intelligence. This does not mean that they necessarily have to have equal formal education.

- * It helps in marriages when the parents of both partners are supportive and happy with the choice their offspring has made. If not, unhappy and critical in-laws can have a destructive effect on an otherwise happy marriage.
- * Serious discussions prior to marriage are helpful in clarifying commitment, trust and responsibilities to their partner within marriage.
- * Partners should discuss their ideas about having children of their own. That is, do they both want to have none, or some, or many.
- * When partners differ in age more than 7 years the chances of separation or divorce increase above the statistical norm.
- * When the parents of either partner have been divorced, especially if there has been more than one divorce, statistically the chances of a successful marriage are lessened.
- * Pre-marital discussions about life -style, sharing money or not, responsible behavior, or future goals can be very worthwhile topics.
- * When it is obvious that your partner is proud of you and is happy to show you off to his/her family and friends this is a good sign of a healthy future marriage.
- * Similar views on religion, morals, philosophical world view, politics, recreation, and expectations for major achievements, etiquette, and respect for your partner are advantageous when they are discussed prior to marriage. Of course, continued thoughtful discussions during the marriage are important as well.
- * Common interests are beneficial although it is also healthy for each partner to have some individual hobbies and achievements.
- * Pre-marital discussions on how to spend money or save it, or owning your own home or not, or sharing long term goals about work or travel are helpful even though the circumstances for these decisions can be changed to meet the best decisions as opportunities arise. Even if these discussions need to be changed as marriage goes along it is still better to have given some prior thought to them.

The suggestions in this short article are not meant to cover every event. Unexpected difficulties such as accidents, health problems, unemployment, and new goals for new employment are problems that come about without expectation.

Even when these special hardships happen many partners are able to support and encourage each other. When couples have already developed the habits of sharing and caring and logically discussing alternatives, good supportive marriages can prevail even through trying times.