

Compatibility

Research findings are highly consistent concerning compatibility. The most stable marriages are those involving two people with many *similarities*. For couples, similarities are money in the bank and differences are like debts that must be paid. When people come from similar backgrounds they operate from a position of strength. Their relationship is made easier by all of the customs and practices they have in common. They know what to expect from each other because they have been raised by parents who modeled and taught similar world views.

Every *difference* a couple has requires negotiation, adaptation and change. If there is an unwillingness to bend and adjust they will experience ongoing flashes of resentment and frustration.

Similarities that are absolutely essential:

1. Intelligence.

If both individuals are similarly endowed intellectually the marriage will have much less strain. This does not necessarily mean they must have the same amount of education (some very smart people never made it to college). It does not matter *how smart* the partners are but *how close* they are intellectually.

2. Values.

There will certainly be trouble if a couple do not share the same moral and spiritual values. The problem arises because they see and react to the world around them in totally different ways.

3. Intimacy.

This is verbal and not sexual intimacy. It involves sharing on a deeper emotional level with one another—heart-to-heart. When both people deeply enjoy being intimate with each other and sharing their lives fully, they have an asset that will help them overcome differences that arise throughout their lives.

4. Interests.

When there are several things that a couple enjoy doing together they have a large field on which they can happily play the game of life. It is always best if these interests reach across several different categories.

5. Expectations about roles.

Both partners have compatible ideas about their duties and responsibilities in the relationship and household.

Differences that spell trouble:

1. Energy level.

When one person has a lot of energy and the other has little there is the makings of major problems. The energy discrepancy may surface almost anywhere (i.e. bedroom, “people” arena, projects around the house, etc.).

2. Personal habits.

Differences might include such things as punctuality, cleanliness, orderliness, dependability, responsibility and weight management.

3. Use of money.

Disagreement about money can destroy a marriage. One may want to save and the other spend as if there is no tomorrow. One may want to be generous with others and the children while the other may insist on setting it aside for a rainy day.

4. Verbal skills.

If one person talks a lot and the other is very quiet there will be problems. If one person is dying for meaningful conversation but the other is desperate for solitude and silence there will be conflict.

When differences exist there must be flexibility, a willingness to be adaptive instead of rigid, a willingness to compromise and adjust.