

The Seven Most Prevalent Causes of Faulty Mate Selection

Marital success or failure can now be predicted before the wedding day with 81 percent accuracy. The following is a seven point check-list for preventing faulty mate selection.

1. The decision to get married is made too quickly.

It is a fact that choosing a mate for life is much more complex than the movies make it out to be. The prospect of marriage must be looked at from many angles, analyzed in good times and bad, evaluated for its longevity as well as its early excitement.

When people take 2-3 years to consider the quality of their partnership they have a significantly better likelihood of making a wise choice.

2. The decision is made at too young an age.

The divorce rate for couples under 20 is incredibly high. The divorce rate for 21-22 year olds is twice as high as it is for 24 and 25 year olds. Young people cannot select a marriage partner very effectively if they do not know themselves well. In this society, where adolescence often lasts until the middle 20's, identity formation is incomplete until individuals have separated from their parents, defined their goals and needs, and have learned to be independent. They simply need more life experiences. Most stable marriages have a "starting date" of 28 years of age.

3. One of both persons are too eager to marry.

People who are too eager to get married often worry that their partner will have a change of heart or they may be simply sick and tired of being alone. Being overly eager to marry is most often associated with the deep and powerful excitement that bubbles up around impending marriage. When two people become driven by excitement they often fail to recognize or understand the heavy demands of marriage.

4. One or both may be choosing a mate to please some else.

Parental influence is incredibly intense and powerful. However careful a person is, virtually every "child" has a strong tendency to choose a mate because of his parents' encouragement. This does not mean we should avoid listening to the important people in our lives about the choice we have made. Listen carefully to their input and take into consideration what they have to say. But remember, sometimes other people want you to make *them* happy. Don't let anyone select your marriage partner for you, and don't allow yourself to select a lifetime mate in order to satisfy someone else.

5. The experience base is too narrow.

Some couples simply have not walked together through the variety of circumstances and situations necessary to really know someone. Those "in love" usually don't want to be bothered with "problem talk". They are convinced that they have all the evidence they need to choose one another. But, in truth, the narrowness of their experience with each other makes their decision risky. It is crucial to broaden your experience together as much as possible—being together early in the morning and late at night; in heavy traffic and on country roads; in times of stress and easy going

moments. Observe him or her playing with children, doing household chores, and balancing the checkbook.

6. The couple has unrealistic expectations.

Marriage will bring serious difficulties and adjustments even when things develop in a positive way. If couples know that pain and strain are inevitable they have a significantly better chance of dealing effectively with them. The key is to be aware of what you are getting into so that you will not be shocked and turned off by one another.

7. One or both may have unaddressed significant personality or behavior problems.

If there are qualities about a partner's personality or behavior that you question—like jealousy, temper, irresponsibility, dishonesty, or stubbornness—ask yourself if you are willing to spend the rest of your life dealing with these problems. Most of the problems named above are personality traits meaning they happen again and again in many different situations, not just once or twice over a long period of time.

Remember, your partner will have little motivation to improve his or her behavior once you have married. To make matters worse, the stress of marriage will tend to magnify the problem and make them considerably more difficult to manage over time.

You may wonder how many of these seven danger signs can be violated without taking too much of a risk. The answer is none.