

Premarital Counseling: Questions to Ask Before You Get Married

By Richard Nicastro, Ph.D.

Getting married is one of the most significant, life-changing events you'll ever face. Unfortunately, people don't always keep this in mind as they plan for their wedding day and not for the more important months and years that follow. Most couples dangerously assume their marriage will just work out, no matter what challenges it faces. Since nearly half the marriages end in divorce and many couples end up in marriage counseling trying to salvage their relationship, it stands to reason that this assumption is highly flawed.

Rather than leave your marriage to chance, begin to cultivate a realistic mindset that will allow you and your partner to prepare for the future. (It's far easier to stop divorce before it is ever brought up as a viable option.)

5 questions to get you started:

1. *Why do you want to get married?*

Give yourself time to reflect on this one. You'd be surprised at how many people get married simply because they feel pressured by family, friends or society. If you're getting hitched because you're the only one of your friends who's still single or your parents want grandchildren, you might want to rethink things before it's too late.

2. *Why do you want to marry **this person**?*

"Because I love him/her" isn't an adequate answer, since love is not enough to make your marriage work. So take a few moments and go deeper. Be *very* specific (saying "S/he is great" doesn't give you useful information, but saying, "S/he is generous and compassionate" can). What is it about this person in particular that makes him/her different from everyone else you might have married?

3. *What core values do you share with your future spouse?*

This is one of those areas of a relationship where compatibility matters. Sure, opposites might attract (you're quiet and he's verbose), but your marriage will be on shaky ground when you don't see eye to eye on issues that matter most to you. While it might be premature to ask someone on the first date about his/her core values, you definitely should be having these conversations well before saying "I do."

4. *What are the main differences between the two of you?*

There is a side effect of love that you should know about. The excitement and euphoria of new love can blur your vision. Love-myopia will narrow your visual field until you only see how well you and your partner get along. All your similarities will be highlighted. It's important to refocus your vision and think about the ways in which you and your partner also differ. You don't want to be blind-sided down the road by a difference you cannot live with.

5. *How do you envision married life?*

You and your future spouse have expectations about being married. Conflict is likely to increase when your expectations are significantly different from your partner's (for instance, he expects the two of you to visit his parents every Saturday, while you envision you and your spouse spending romantic weekends alone). Many couples may also have unrealistic expectations about love and

become disillusioned when faced with the changes that are a natural part of long-term relationships.

When you give these questions serious consideration, you take an important step toward preparing for the joys and challenges of marriage. Share your responses with your future spouse. The discussion that follows should help you develop a foundation based on shared knowledge and realistic expectations.

Author Bio

Over the past fifteen years Richard Nicastro, Ph.D. has helped couples build stronger, more fulfilling marriages and relationships. Dr. Nicastro has lectured at several universities and now conducts workshops for couples on a wide range of issues. His relationship advice has appeared on television, radio and in national magazines. A member of the International Coach Federation, Dr. Nicastro is passionate about coaching and believes that healthy relationships can add meaning and fulfillment to our lives. His goal is to guide individuals and couples as they implement the skills that will allow their relationships to flourish.

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