

Before You Say "I Do" ... What's Your I.Q.* ?

*Intimacy Quotient

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If you're thinking of marriage, you may want to know!

Remember the last time you filled out one of those questionnaires or checklists that was supposed to tell you whether you and your mate were *really* compatible? Or the one that promised to tell you whether he or she was *the* one for you? All you had to do was check twenty multiple-choice boxes and add up the score.

If you're like me, you felt pretty silly after you finished. Who needs a test that asks you a lot of trite questions or tells you things you already know? Or one that sums up all the complexities of couple interactions in a single magic number?

Still, haven't you thought it would be helpful if someone put together a list of those things that really *do* seem to

matter in a successful and rewarding relationship? All those issues that seem to crop up after you and your partner find the novelty wearing thin, or begin to realize that having fun together isn't the only thing that keeps a relationship alive. Could there be a way to find out more quickly about important differences in tastes, habits, values, aspirations, and needs—that package of things that we think means *compatibility*?

Take a close look at your present relationship. How long was it before you got around to discussing your feelings about children? Religion? Divorce? What? ... You haven't? What assumptions have you been making about your partner's attitude about homosexuals? Extramarital sex? Family finances? How are you at solving problems together? Problems? What problems?

Whether you're just getting acquainted or think you know much more about each other than you ever wanted to, discussing such things openly and honestly can not only avoid conflicts later; it can enrich your relationship by giving you lots of practice communicating about attitudes and values.

That's why I made up this *Get Acquainted and Communication Exercise for Couples*. Over the years, from many discussions with friends and partners, I've kept track of topics that seem worth discussing—things

that opened up communication and led beyond the superficial. Things that helped me find partners with whom I could share ideas, experiences, and feelings on many levels.

You can use this exercise in many ways. You can sit down together and fill in your answers, then compare and discuss them. If you don't like writing things down, you can just talk over the items that interest you, expanding upon answers that surprise you. (That means you just learned something new about your partner.) Or, when the conversation lulls, you can watch your partner's expression when you randomly toss in: "What do you do when your mate wants sex and you don't?"

Romantics may feel threatened by this forthright alternative to the mating game, but couples willing to invest a few hours of open discussion are likely to find that they have more choice and control in their love relationships. Perhaps they will also find themselves making more rational decisions about prospective mates, by consciously considering the values most important to them.

Here, then, are the questions. Because there are 137 of them, and because most require some thought, you may feel like tackling only a few at a time. So there are ten

categories, including self-image, tastes and life-style, problem-solving, controversial current issues, love, sex, and marriage, religion, children, and money. The questions range from trivial to crucial, from fun to serious. The important thing to realize is that there are no right or wrong answers. Your “compatibility” score is measured by the openness of your own responses and your accommodations to each other’s. Its purpose is to stimulate communication and understanding, not reduce you to a number. Another way I have used the exercise is to record my own answers periodically and observe how they change over time—a kind of personal inventory of my own values and outlook.

Even if you think you know each other well, you’re sure to uncover issues that you’ve avoided discussing. And you’ll probably learn as much about yourself as about your partner. At the very least, I hope you have fun!

GET-ACQUAINTED AND COMMUNICATION EXERCISE FOR COUPLES

SELF-IMAGE

1. Five words that best describe me are . . .
2. Other people most often say that I am . . .
3. The things I like most about myself are . . .
4. What I want most to change about myself is . . .
5. My body is . . .
6. I feel reasonably happy about ___ percent of the time.
7. My sweatshirt slogan would say . . .
8. My epitaph would say . . .
9. Three people I most admire are . . .

TASTES AND LIFE-STYLE

10. My educational background is . . .
11. My cultural background is . . .
12. My hobbies are . . .

13. I spend most of my leisure time . . .
14. The best movies I ever saw were . . .
15. The best books I ever read are . . .
16. The kinds of music I like best are . . .
17. Sports I enjoy most as a spectator are . . .
and as a participant . . .
18. I normally sleep from about ____ to ____ when I
don't have to work.
19. My favorite TV shows are . . .
20. My favorite kinds of food are . . .
21. My favorite animals are . . .
22. My Favorite Martian is . . .
23. Some examples of my favorite kinds of humor are
. . .
24. The most fun I ever had was when . . .
25. When I want to have fun, I usually . . .
26. The kinds of things I like to do best on a date are .
. .
27. I have a drink about every . . .
28. My attitude toward using recreational drugs is . . .
29. I get most of my physical exercise by . . .
30. My favorite topic of conversation is . . .

31. The kinds of leisure activities I enjoy *least* are . . .

32. I am afraid of . . .

33. Some of the most rewarding and enjoyable things I have ever done are . . .

34. I feel most creative when I . . .

35. Three things I want most to accomplish before I die are . . .

36. The kind of place I dream of living in is . . .

37. The most interesting place I have traveled is . . .

38. I would describe my job as . . .

39. If a genie appeared and granted me three wishes, I would ask for . . .

40. I would describe my life style as . . .

41. I would call the pace of my life . . .

42. On a scale of 1 to 10, my neatness index is . . .

PROBLEM-SOLVING

43. The biggest problem in my life right now is . . .

44. What I am doing about it is . . .

45. The most significant change I have made in myself in the last year is . . .

46. If I discovered that I had only six months to live, I would . . .

47. When I feel depressed, I usually . . .
48. When I want sex and my mate doesn't, I usually . .
49. When my mate wants sex and I don't, I usually . . .
50. When I get very angry with my mate, I usually show it by . .
51. If my mate's career required him/her to move to a distant city, I would . . .
52. The way my relationships often end is . . .

JUDGMENTS ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL CURRENT ISSUES

53. Smoking is . . .
54. For me, political activity is . . .
55. I would call my political ideology . . .
56. Was it a good idea to send men to the moon?
Why?
57. I respond to the threat of sexually transmitted diseases by . .
58. The most effective thing that could be done about the world food crisis is . . .
59. The most important and lasting effect of the feminist movement has been . . .
60. Marijuana is . . .
61. Homosexuals are . . .

62. Nudity is . . .

63. Where the speed limit is 55 mph, I usually go . . .

64. The class of people I have the strongest negative feelings about is . . .

YOUR LIFE SCRIPT

65. My sign is _____. This means that I'm . . .

66. My mother was . . .

67. My mother always said I should be . . .

68. My father was . . .

69. My father always said I should be . . .

70. My parents' marriage was . . .

71. As a child, my role in the family was . . .

72. My parents seem to feel _____
about the way I turned out.

73. I plan to live to age ____.

LOVE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

74. When I meet a person of the opposite sex, the amount of attraction I feel immediately is determined mainly by . . .

75. Things that turn me on most about a man/woman are . . .

76. Things that turn me off most about a man/woman are . . .
77. The things I want most for myself right now from a relationship with a man/woman are . . .
78. The things I want most to avoid in future relationships are . .
79. To me, love means . . .
80. To me, intimacy means . . .
81. To me, commitment means . . .
82. Would you consider living with a man/woman with no prospects of a legal marriage?
83. How would you feel about living with someone who had
(a) occasional outside sexual relations?
(b) frequent outside sexual relations?
84. How much would you want to know about it?
85. I deal with the threat of sexually transmitted diseases by . . .
86. I think marriage is . . .
87. I think that traditional male/female roles in marriage are . . .
88. What sort of role would you design for yourself and for your partner in a marriage or quasi-marriage?
89. I would get married if . . .
90. A marriage should last . . .

91. The thing that most determines whether a marriage will last is . . .
92. The most useful things I have learned from previous marriages and intimate relationships are . . .
93. Divorce is . . .
94. If you thought your marriage contract had to be renewed annually, what would you do differently?
95. Extramarital sex is . . .
96. The kind of sex I like best is . . .
97. I get horny if I don't have sex about every . . .
98. I would have sex with a person I had just met if . .
99. Sexual play without actual intercourse is . . .
100. For me, enjoyment of a sexual experience is about ____ percent physical and ____ percent emotional.
101. Habits of mine that most irritated my former mate were . .
102. Habits of my former mate that most irritated me were . . .
103. What each of us did about those irritations was . . .
104. When my mate criticizes me or asks me to change my behavior, I feel . . .
105. I would not be completely honest with my mate about . . .

106. In most of my relationships, I feel like (a) I gave the most, (b) my mate gave the most, (c) it was about equal.

107. I usually decide to end a relationship when . . .

RELIGION

108. My religious upbringing was . . .

109. Its principal effect on me was . . .

110. The way I feel about religion now is . . .

111. God is . . .

112. When a man dies, he . . .

113. The most inflexible, inviolable principle or value in my life is . . .

114. I feel most guilty when I . . .

115. If a prospective mate had drastically different feelings about religion than mine, I would . . .

CHILDREN

116. Children should be . . .

117. The way I feel about children is . . .

118. The most important things a parent can do for his children are . . .

119. The most important thing a child can learn in school is . . .

120. Responsible parents should have no more than ___ children.
121. Birth control is . . .
122. Abortion is . . .
123. The best way and time for a child to learn about sex are . .
124. After my children are grown, I will . . .
125. If you now have children, how important is it that a future mate be a good parent to those children?
126. How able and willing are you to be a good parent to any children a future mate may already have?
127. How strongly do you feel that your children receive a particular kind of (including no) religious training?

MONEY

128. To me, money is . . .
129. Who should pay for dates?
130. A good way to manage family finances is . . .
131. The money issue I most often argue about is . . .
132. I would cheat on my tax return if . . .
133. I would lend money to a friend if . . .
134. Alimony is . . .

ABOUT THE EXERCISE

135. The questions I had the most trouble answering were . . .

136. Are there any questions you think it important to add?

137. What do you think of someone who would ask you to do an exercise like this?

Finally, write in the space below a brief "personals" ad, describing yourself and what you want . . .