

You're Going To Hate This

Let's get this straight right up front. This is a guy piece. Ladies, put it down. The title applies to you.

Men, and I use the word loosely, assuming you've gathered a few grains of maturity by now. If you haven't, go join the ladies. You won't be able to deal with this. Okay, that said, let's get to it. Topic? Love and marriage - an experienced point of view. First off, forget all the crap you read in psych books. None of that reflects life. So, now comes the practical advice.

Say you're a young man who has found the perfect lady. Right! Before you slip that ring on her finger and promise 'til death do we part, meet her family - the female side. Check out her mother (and grandmother if she's still around). Note the age difference between your new "true love" and her mother - probably eighteen or more years. Take a good long look. Trust me, that's who your "true love" will be in eighteen or less years. If your gut announces you can't stand the old hag, tighten your shoe laces and take a walk - a quick one and start looking somewhere else. If your "true love" was reared by someone other than her natural mother, meet the surrogate who did. The same rule applies except to her biological physique.

Okay, so the mother passes muster. You really like her a lot and she treats you like a man. Note that I didn't say "like a son". If she does the latter, you're in for it. In her eyes, you'll never grow up. Moreover, it's contagious. Your "true love" will treat you like a child. However if all has gone well up to this point, you're ready to move on.

Phase two. Don't buy that crap about having so much in common. Write this on the back of your hand. Like magnets, opposites attract. The both of you have to mesh like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. You supply the strong points she lacks and vice versa. If the both of you don't mesh, the marriage won't work no matter what. Period. Exclamation point! If you want a relationship where you provide the money and she takes care of the home, hire a maid. It will be cheaper in the long run. Your "true love" will resent your managing the finances. The same when you try to "share" your pay. If you're the sole breadwinner, you set out the budget after consultation with your spouse and she lives with what she gets. Like a functioning business, marriage has one person in charge when it comes to money. The best one at it rules. As in commerce, equal partnerships never work out. Is this important? Damn straight! Hostility generated over finances drives most couples apart. An undercurrent builds and, by the time it boils to the surface, forget it. You're both ready for divorce. Moreover, don't get suckered by the myth that you can share money management. It never happens in real life if you're busting your butt earning a paycheck. In that case, most of the hostility will be generated by you. She will never seem to understand why a dollar has a greater personal value from your perspective and you'll make the transition to resentment - the

guaranteed death knell. Listen in on your married friends' conversations. Their bitching will lay it out. Oh yeah, forget the two wage earner family notion. It works for a while until you don't have kids. If you're thinking of getting a nanny for the children while your wife holds down a job, marry the nanny instead. It will be a lot less grief. Exception to the rule: If you want to be a house husband and send your wife off to work, go for it. That arrangement can succeed as long as the trading places is complete. Her money. She gets to call the shots. Live with it.

At this point, you might have wondered why I put "true love" in quotes. Take a deep breath for this one. There ain't no such thing! (Grammar and double negative notwithstanding.) The majority of relationships begin with lust on your (guy) part. Her motives are far too many to list and explain. It would take a book the size of "War and Peace" (and as boring) to sort them out. So trust me and face up to your lust. A marriage based on that is already on the rocks. Your "true love" may be fabulous but remember the old adage: familiarity breeds contempt. No matter how fabulous she is, you're going to start noticing the flaws in a very short while. So you best start from day one. Step back and carefully scrutinize your bride-to-be. All those "cute little quirks" may be overlooked while you're running on testosterone but they are going to become major annoyances when your glands settle down. The dating and engagement period is the old bait and switch con. Just be sure the switch doesn't occur after the wedding ring(s) go on. If you're halfway intelligent you'll get a grip on your lust. Marriage is a commitment, not a temporary sleepover event. To a guy, love is a misspelled word. It works out l-u-s-t.

At this point, forget the word "love". The lady you marry should be your best friend. That's the only way the marriage will work out. Friends accept each other, flaws and all. And, you're going to spend years together. Get that through your head. I repeat, YEARS! Let that sink in before you start dropping your pants for anything but a one night stand.

Oh, while I'm on the subject, one more bit of advice. The fate of a marriage doesn't rest in the bedroom. It survives in the rest of the house. The bathroom is a killer. Picture you and your new wife a couple of years later when you first get up in the morning with dumpster breath and demeanor. That should be a reality check all by itself. You both stumble into the kitchen to suck up some coffee looking like a couple of homeless drunks. If you can survive that and still enjoy each other's company, you're true friends and have the marriage thing knocked.

Along the lines of home trauma, the next fatal place is the living room with the television on. Couch potatoes live in isolation. If you want to spend your evenings staring at the boob tube, remain a bachelor and get a place of your own. What else is there? Well, try something novel. Turn off the TV and talk! If you can't find anything to say to each other or find that only leads to arguments, you'll find divorce attorneys listed in the Yellow Pages. Hurry and give one a call before the notion dawns on her. And, for God's sake, don't say you'll "stay together for the kids". All that crap means is that you're afraid she

will totally rip you off - kids, home, car and the bulk of your future paychecks. Possible outcomes you should consider BEFORE putting that down payment on a ring set.

At any rate, the conversing bit is an extension of being best friends. If nothing else, gossip about how everybody else is so bad off. It will make your marriage seem better than it is. That "us against the world" has kept many a marriage happily together for untold years.

There is more that I could offer but, for now, I'll leave you with this. Don't seek out happy couples for advice. Ask the ones who have been divorced. Happy couples are the poorest judges of what they have done right, whereas a divorced person knows full well what they did wrong and will gladly share it. However, do what I do. When the person says "she blah-blah-blah", I switch the pronoun and replace the "she" with a "he". I bat about .750 with that one. Blame shifting a privilege granted by divorce courts.

The final piece of advice. Ignore all of the above. You will anyway. No one ever listens to me.

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Leroy Dumont
(aka ADSouza, Kulwan)