

***Connections***  
**Volume 2, Number 3**  
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**Is this Mr./Ms. Right? - Part II**  
***Red Flags Around Mr./Ms. Right***

In previous articles, we've emphasized the importance of three crucial ingredients for a successful romantic relationship.

First is emotional/sexual chemistry. Chemistry is either present or not. While there's much we can do to keep it alive, there's little we can do to create it. A lack of emotional/sexual chemistry is clearly a red flag.

Second are the challenging, but essential interpersonal skills that must be mastered for success. An unwillingness to learn and/or practice these skills is also a clear red flag.

The third area is the one in which we believe red flags can show up in a less overt way. The third crucial ingredient for a successful romantic relationship is ***shared core values***. A lack of core values is also a very red flag.

There are many values that might be important for a couple to share--many that you might want to add to our very short list that follows. But we believe that the two values we are going to discuss most often are involved in making or breaking a relationship.

We certainly aren't saying that it's easy to discern if these values are held by your prospective partner. But we are saying two things:

First -- It's worth significant effort to find out if these values are held in common.

Second -- If both individuals don't share these values at a deep level, the relationship doesn't have much of a chance of staying alive (though it may endure).

What are these values? Simply put:

- 1) Valuing the necessity of conscious, intentional, challenging work on oneself and on the relationship.
- 2) Honesty in the deepest and broadest sense. (discussed in Vol. 2, Issue 2 January issue of ***Connections***).

We have found that there is a sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, but frequently deeply ingrained, belief in our culture that:

- a) if you've found the right person, you shouldn't need to work on the relationship.
- b) if you need to work to have a good relationship, you don't have the right partner.

**NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH.**

And yet, what percentage of the 50% of first marriages that end in divorce do more than a few token marriage counseling sessions to try to "save" the marriage? Our impression - less than 5%. What percentage seek **any** kind of consultation? Very low. Our sense is that the same low percentages would apply to the 63% of second marriages that end in divorce.

By contrast, what percentage of people would seek mechanical consultation if their car were sputtering or pulling to one side? And yet in theory people value their marriages or other important romantic relationships more than their cars.

Our point is that this belief that we shouldn't need to work on our romantic relationships is widely and deeply held. If beyond that, the belief is consciously and firmly held -- you've found a genuine Red Flag.

On the other hand, usually the belief is subconscious- the person doesn't even realize that he or she has the belief. What to do?

### **TRY IT OUT**

- 1) Simply ask about your potential partner's (and your own) belief in this area.
- 2) Ask what efforts were made to help prior relationship/marriages.
- 3) If professional consultation was sought - how much? What did your partner learn about his or her contribution to the problems (in addition to whatever was learned about his or her partner)? Was the experience rewarding, a pain?
- 4) If professional consultation was not sought, why not?
- 5) If the two of you were to have problems, would he/she be open to counseling?

These questions should be part of a respectful conversation which involves mutual sharing (as well as the mirroring, validation and empathy we often discuss).

Somehow the point needs to be made that you aren't trying to trick the truth out of your prospective partner, nor are you planning to change your partner's views. On the other hand, if it is discovered that the value of hard work on a relationship isn't shared, unnecessary suffering can be avoided by acknowledging the crucial difference and parting company.

Your partner will more likely come to his or her own truth about these matters and report the truth to you, if you mirror, validate and empathize with what they share.

Your listening well won't guarantee honesty, but it certainly will make it more likely.

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### **SUGGESTED READING**

Sam Keen, *To Love and Be Loved*

**KIND WORDS:**

Re: CONNECTIONS

"I just received the first issue of your newsletter and found it to be one of the more positive and hopeful things I have seen on the web..."

Chuck Simkinson, Ph.D. - founder and editor  
Common Boundary Magazine

Re: Going for the Gold - Couples Workshop

"Your workshop exceeded my expectations. Although it seems that all of the exercises we have done dredged up some of the pain that goes with a lot of buried minefields, each class has pulled us up to a new level of spiritual maturity in the marriage. You have managed to ask and expect a level of maturity in a relationship I would not have considered achievable...I would characterize your gift to me as providing a way to new hope from a shipwreck of lost innocence. I encourage you to hold up your vision of what a marriage can be for all of us."

Linda Strand - Couples Workshop Participant

Re: Singles Coaching

What I most appreciated about the workshop was "the authenticity and openness of John and Harriet and their obvious commitment to their relationship".

Mary Vogel - Workshop Participant

"...and their excitement about this work."

Rhonda Gordon - Singles Workshop Participant

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