

CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU GET TOO CLOSE

Dr. Love's Guide to Getting
To Know Someone
Before You're in Too Deep

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TILL DEATH DO US PART
(UNLESS I KILL YOU FIRST)

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Critical Questions to Ask Before You Get Close

Want to know if someone is dead wrong for you BEFORE you get in too deep?

My Critical Questions to Ask Before Getting Close is preventive medicine for your heart...

Knowledge is power. When you know the right questions to ask, you'll be empowered to steer clear of people who may be right for someone else but not right for you.

Your goal is to discover how much you have in common with your potential partner. What are you looking for are similarities in financial, sexual, religious, familial and political values, expectations, tastes and preferences.

You will also be looking for similar interests and hobbies, personality traits, emotional communication styles, intimacy needs, problems solving methods, and much more.

Here are the steps you'll want to take:

Download this list of Critical Questions and keep rereading them until they are very familiar.

Use these questions as a guide when you 'interview' your intended partner. Obviously, I don't want you to grill your intended--he or she is not a steak--but I do want you to gradually gather answers to all these vital questions.

Common Interests

- You're looking for similar interests, hobbies, and preferred leisure activities.

- 1) Ask how your intended likes to spend his/her free time.
- 2) Ask interested questions to find out if his/her hobbies are similar to yours.
- 3) Find out if you both enjoy the same leisure pursuits.

Finances

You want to determine if your financial values are similar. You also want to have the

sense that you will be able to discuss and agree on financial decisions.

- 1) Find out if you share similar money values (how much money should be saved for retirement vs. spent, etc.).
- 2) Find out if you both agree (or feel confident that you can agree) on how you both will handle the assets and debts in a relationship.
- 3) Find out if you're both similar in the way you like to plan for future financial security (i.e. insurance, savings, investments, wills, etc.).
- 4) See if you agree on the use that should be made of credit cards in financial management.
- 5) Find out if you're both similar in terms of the importance you give to social status, money, and possessions in your lives.
- 6) See if the economic lifestyles of your families are fairly similar.

Career and Work

You're looking for a similar level of career ambition and drive.

- 1) Inquire if he/she puts work ahead of relationships.
- 2) Ask subtle questions to see if he/she would be willing to allow work to interfere with your relationship.
- 3) If you intend to have children, find out if you both agree on whether a wife should work outside the home or not after having children.

Children and Child Rearing

You're looking for similar expectations regarding whether or not you will have children. If children will be in the picture, you also want to have similar values about how children should be reared.

- 1) Find out if only one of you wants children. Not wanting to have a child is a position that isn't likely to change. Finding this out early in the game is vital. If you both agree that you don't want children, you may skip all remaining questions in this section.
- 2) Find out if one of you wants kids right away and if the other does not. If this is uncovered, more questions are needed to determine how long the person who isn't ready wants to wait and if this works for the one who's ready to start a family.

- 3) If you both want children, find out if you both agree that children should not become more important than your relationship as a couple.
- 4) See if you're both in agreement on how you want to combine careers and child rearing.
- 5) Ask questions aimed at finding out if you both agree on how to divide the responsibilities of child care and child rearing.
- 6) Find out if you agree on how to rear your children. Do you both agree that rewarding good behavior with positive reinforcement and praise and ignoring bad behavior is the correct way to raise a child? (It is, by the way). Find out his/her position on yelling, grounding, punishments, physical beatings, etc. All these issues need to be discussed.
- 7) Find out if one or both of your families would interfere with the way you intend to rear your children.
- 8) See if you agree on how you will handle church customs and traditions and sacramental preparations with your children.

Family Issues

You want to know whether your families will mesh well on many different levels.

- 1) Ask about his/her family--their habits, values, and beliefs. Try to meet his/her family as soon as possible and see if you like each other.
- 2) Discuss your family with him/her and talk about their habits, values, and beliefs. Try to have him/her meet your family as soon as possible. See if your family accepts him and if he/she likes them.
- 3) Find out if either of your families will try to interfere with your relationship.
- 4) Ask subtle questions to determine if he/she intends to put family ahead of your relationship.
- 5) Learn whether the amount of time he/she intends to spend with family is acceptable to you.

6) Ask him/her if the amount of time you intend to spend with your family is acceptable.

Friends

You want to see eye-to-eye on the role that friends will play in your lives.

- 1) Do you both plan to have mutual friends that you both enjoy together or:
- 2) Are you both in agreement on whether you will maintain your own friendships outside the relationship?
- 3) Do you both agree on how much time you will spend being with your own friends?
- 4) Do you agree on how much time you want to spend alone as a couple and how much time you want to spend socializing with other couples?
- 5) Find out how much time he/she likes to spend each week with his/her friends. If you're a female questioning a male, find out how much time he spends watching and participating in sports. In other words, find out before it's too late, if you're going to be a sports widow.

Religion

You're looking for similar religious and spiritual values.

- 1) Do you share similar religious (or spiritual) beliefs?
- 2) Do you both agree on how much religion will be a part of your lives?
- 3) Does one or both of you worship more often than the other and could this be a problem?
- 4) Do you agree on the way you will worship together?
- 5) Is either of you concerned that your different views on religion could cause problems?

Household Chores

You're looking for similar values in terms of how to divide the responsibilities of running a home.

- 1) Find out if you both agree on how chores and household tasks will be divided if you were to live together or marry.
- 2) Find out if he/she has traditional or liberal values regarding housework. If you are a woman and you intend to work full-time, ask if he still expects you to do all the

housework.

Birth Control

You want to agree on the type of birth control you will or won't use.

1) Find out if you're in agreement on the type of birth control you will or won't use.

STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases)

You want to be of the same mind when it comes to dealing with STDs.

1) Are you both in agreement about the need to use condoms until you both get tested for HIV and other STDs.

2) Do you both agree that you will use condoms until your test results come back clean?

Past History

You want to find out if your intended partner's past could affect your relationship.

1) Find out about his/her relationship with mom and dad? Were they close? Did they fight a lot? Are they estranged?

2) Find out if his/her parents had a good relationship. If they didn't, then ask what went wrong, to get a sense of whether he or she is going to repeat their patterns.

3) Find out if his/her past emotional involvements could negatively affect your relationship.

4) Make sure that your intended partner isn't still emotionally attached to someone else or still haunted by a past relationship.

Personality Traits

It's important to find out all you can about your intended partner's personality traits. The following questions will help you do just that.

1) Ask yourself if you like his/her habits and behaviors.

2) Question yourself as to whether you have felt frightened by him/her.

- 3) Ask yourself if you have ever wished that he/she would change? (Remember, you're buying your partner as an "as is" item. What you see is what you get. It's hard enough to change ourselves, let alone others!)
- 4) Ask yourself if you feel comfortable around him/her.
- 5) Find out if you're both similar in your desire to continue growing and learning.
- 6) Find out if jealousy has created problems for him/her in past relationships.
- 7) Ask yourself if you feel worried that he/she isn't being honest.
- 8) See if he/she has difficulty compromising. (Beware if he/she does, because you're going to be at war most of the time.)
- 9) Find out if he or she is willing to admit when a mistake was made. (A good way to find out is to watch how he/she reacts after having made a mistake.)
- 10) Find out if he or she is stubborn and inflexible. (God help you, if he/she is! If you feel like yielding all the time, then he's perfect for you. Otherwise, run for the hills, because this person will make you miserable!)
- 11) Do you find yourself hoping that he/she will change after you are married (or living together)? (Don't count on it. You have more chances of a pig flying!)
- 12) Do you fear that he/she will cause you harm?
- 13) Find out if he/she feels that he can't be happy unless you're married.
- 14) Ask if your intended usually reaches the goals that he/she sets.
- 15) Find out if jealousy or suspiciousness has created problems in his/her past relationships.
- 16) Do you feel that your intended is too possessive or clingy?
- 17) See if he/she only feels happy when you are together.
- 18) Find out if your intended feels that he/she can't live without you. (If he/she feels this way, you're dealing with a dependent type who will want to be nursed by you. Beware of chronically chapped nipples.)

Emotional Communication

You are looking for similar emotional communication styles and a relatively similar level of skills.

- 1) Your intended knows what he/she thinks and feels and is willing to share this information with you.
- 2) Find out if your intended is willing to listen and understand when you want to talk over something that's bothering you.
- 3) Do you feel that you can depend on each other when emotional support is needed?
- 4) Do your feelings for each other grow stronger each day.
- 5) Find out if he/she has a hard time understanding how you feel.
- 6) See if one or both of you often wonders what the other person is thinking or feeling.

7) Find out if your intended is capable of being responsive to your needs and whether your intended feels that you are responsive to his/hers.

Problem Solving

You're looking for a willingness to solve problems with you.

- 1) Do you fear that one of you values keeping peace at any price, while the other does not?
- 2) Find out if the way one or both of your families solve problems could negatively affect how you solve problems as a couple.
- 3) Do you fight more often than one or both of you would like?
- 4) When you disagree, can you resolve your conflict right away?
- 5) After a fight, does one or both of you stay angry with the other person for days? (Not good! Remember the ideal is to deal in the moment and let it go.)
- 6) Find out how you both behave when you're angry with each other. Do either of you verbally abuse and call the other names? (If you said yes, you're headed for a rocky road. Both of you need to learn my conflict resolution techniques, which are detailed in my Psychological Check-Up and in my book Till Death Do Us Part: Unless I Kill You First).
- 7) Find out if either or both of you try to win when you fight. (Remember, if you win, you lose.)
- 8) Do you feel that you'd like your intended to change how he/she handles angry feelings? Does your intended want to change how you handle yours? (You need to find out early on whether your intended is willing to make the needed changes and vice versa.)
- 9) After a conflict, see if you're both able to resolve your differences.
- 10) Does your intended get even with you when he or she is angry? (Paybacks are one of the many Fight Traps (dysfunctional fighting tactics) that create more conflict in the long run.)
- 11) Does your intended feel that you get even with him/her when you're angry? (If your intended does feel this way about you, then you need to commit to identifying and eliminating all the Fight Traps (dysfunctional fighting tactics) that you use and replace them with healthy conflict resolution skills (fully outlined in my Psychological Check-Up and in my book).
- 12) Find out if one or both of you avoids discussing your disagreements. (If you do, trouble is waiting for you both. Learn my conflict resolution skills now!)
- 13) Find out if one or both of you is concerned that one factor (children, money, sex, work, etc.) may create conflicts for you.

Respect

Mutual respect is vital. To find out if respect exists between you:

- 1) Observe how your intended treats you. Does he/she make you feel respected?
- 2) Does your intended feel that you respect him/her?
- 3) Do you secretly disrespect your intended for his/her past actions?
- 4) Does he/she disrespect you for your past actions?

Commitment

You're looking for a similar desire for commitment or lack thereof.

- 1) Does your intended worry that you are the wrong person for him/her? Do you worry about this?
- 2) Does your intended feel that having a wedding is too much of a production? Do you agree on this point?
- 3) Does either of you worry that your love won't stand the test of time?
- 4) Do you want to spend the rest of your life with your intended and does he/she feel the same?
- 5) Do you feel that your intended has cold feet when it comes to making a commitment?
- 5) Have you loved each other for more than six months? (After six months, you can be fairly sure that you're in love as opposed to only being in lust.)

Intimacy

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You want to have similar intimacy needs.

- 1) See if you agree on how much time you both need to spend alone.
- 2) Find out if your intended pulls away from you more than you're comfortable with.
- 3) Find out if your intended feels that you pull away from him/her too often.
- 4) Find out if either of you feels that the other person puts work, family, other friends, sports, television watching, or outside interests ahead of the relationship.
- 5) Find out if there are certain issues that your intended insists on keeping a secret. Are you all right with this?
- 6) Do you have issues that you won't discuss with him/her? Is your intended all right

with that?

7) Find out if you both respect each other's desire to perform individual activities and to spend time alone.

Sex

You're looking for a high level of similarity in terms of your tastes and level of desire.

- 1) Find out if you can talk about your sexual fears, preferences, likes, and dislikes.
- 2) Ask if you're in agreement on the type of birth control you use (or will use).
- 3) Find out if either of you is concerned about the other person's previous sexual experiences.
- 4) Are you both satisfied with your sex life?
- 5) Do you argue about sex?
- 6) Does one or both of you worry that a past sexual relationship could negatively affect your relationship?
- 7) Do you agree on the amount of sex that you have (how many times per day, week, month, etc.)?
- 8) Do you agree on the type of sex that you have (positions, etc.)?
- 9) Does one of you want to wait to have sex and is this all right?
- 10) Does one of you not want to have sex prior to marriage? Is this acceptable to you both?
- 11) Find out if you both agree on how much you want to experiment with various sexual practices and positions.
- 12) Find out if you both agree on whether or not you will be sexually faithful to each other.
- 13) Ask yourself if you're concerned that one or both of you will use sex to control the other.

Life Changes

You want to be similar in your willingness to embrace life changes.

- 1) Ask questions to find out if you both are similar in your desire to have your relationship grow and evolve over time.
- 2) Do you have the sense that he/she would be willing to grow with you?
- 3) Does your intended feel that you are willing to grow with him/her?

Leisure

You want to have similar leisure interests and habits. If you don't share the same interests, you at least want to be comfortable with each other's leisure activities.

- 1) See if you're comfortable with your intended's choice of hobbies or recreational activities. Also find out if he/she is comfortable with yours.
- 2) Find out if you both enjoy many of the same hobbies and recreational activities. Also discuss whether you both agree on whether you will share your hobbies.
- 3) Find out if you both spend a similar amount of time each day or week on leisure activities.
- 4) See if you both agree on how you like to spend time off and weekends.
- 5) Find out if you both enjoy the same type of vacation (camping, cruises, etc.).
- 6) Find out if you both agree on how much time you will vacation each year and whether you will vacation alone or with family.

Decision Making

You want to be as similar as possible in the way you address your decision making.

- 1) Find out if you are both willing to seek the other person's input before making decisions that will affect you both.
- 2) Find out if you agree (or feel sure that you can agree) on the surroundings where you will live (location, neighborhood, house or apartment).

Life Goals

You're looking for similar life goals.

- 1) Find out if you agree on your future goals and ambitions.

Blended Families (Second time around couples). You want answers to all that applies to your situation. Skip what doesn't apply.

- 1) Do you feel comfortable with your intended disciplining your children?
- 2) Is your intended comfortable when you discipline his children?
- 3) Do you agree on what furnishings and possessions each of you will bring to your new home?

- 4) Do you both agree on the extent to which you will allow children from first marriages to come ahead of your relationship?
- 5) Have you discussed with your children some of the changes that your relationship will mean in their lives and is everyone comfortable with the changes?
- 6) Find out if either of you is concerned that a previous spouse or lover or memories of a previous spouse or lover will cause problems in your relationship.

That's it!

If you feel like you need to rush out and buy a high intensity interrogation lamp and a few torture tools to get your intended to talk...relax! This list took time to read...a lasting relationship takes even more time to develop.

You needn't be in a hurry to fill in all the blanks, just be aware of the issues and let the discussion of them come up easily and naturally.