

THE MARRIAGE TEST

Even though marriage is the most durable institution civilization has known, building a good marriage has never been easy, and many people tend to give up too soon. Do you have the patience and understanding it takes to build a lasting relationship? To help you find out, here's a quiz condensed from a WNBC-TV program moderated by the station's science editor, Frank Field. The answers come from a distinguished panel of psychiatrists: Dr. Helen Singer Kaplan, director of the Human Sexuality Program of The New York Hospital, Cornell Medical Center; Dr. William Appleton, co-author of How Not to Split Up; Dr. Harold I. Lief, director of the Marriage Council of Philadelphia; and Dr. Sidney Lecker, director of Behavioral Science for the Executive Health Examiners Group.

Condensed from a WNBC-TV Program
Written, produced and directed by Don Luftig

1. What is the most common marriage complaint heard by both psychiatrists and marital therapists? Lack of (a) sex; (b) money; (c) communication.
2. Can too much honesty between a couple create major difficulties? (a) yes; (b) no.
3. Is the woman who stays home and takes care of the children (a) more likely or (b) less likely to have marital problems than the working wife?
4. The more money you make, the longer your marriage is likely to last. (a) true; (b) false.
5. Are more women who get divorced (a) under age 30; (b) between 30 and 40; (c) over 40?
6. Which emotion is most likely to drive a husband or wife into an affair? (a) jealousy; (b) anger; (c) hate.
7. Is your spouse likely to have at least one extramarital affair? (a) yes; (b) no.
8. If you have had an affair and feel guilty, confessing will clear your conscience. (a) true; (b) false.
9. The marriage of a couple who have an excellent sex life will last considerably longer than that of a couple with an ordinary or bad sex life. (a) true; (b) false.
10. Nearly 40 percent of all first marriages end in divorce. Is the percentage larger on second marriages? (a) yes; (b) no.
11. A close friend is having serious difficulties with his or her marriage, and wants to talk to you about it. You should: (a) encourage your friend to get any hidden feelings into the open; (b) give direction when you feel your friend is unable to cope; (c) just be available as a sounding board.

1. (c) Lack of communication. People have problems communicating, says Dr. Helen Singer Kaplan, if they are unable to talk about their own feelings or to sense those of their partner. Suppose a woman finds her husband too fast or mechanical in their sexual relationship. She might be afraid to speak out and may express her frustration by demanding new furniture when she knows her husband is anxious about money. So, instead of saying something constructive such as "Sweetheart, let's try to make love in a better way," she'll say she needs a new dining-room set, and they will end up fighting.

2. (a) Yes. Too much frankness sometimes shows a lack of consideration, says Dr. William Appleton. You don't have to state everything that's on your mind--there's a big difference between a tactful and loving sharing of thoughts and a continual broadcasting of one's feelings and criticisms. While candor is often commendable, too much of it can be cruel. Try to avoid hurting your partner unnecessarily. That never accomplishes anything.

3. (a) More likely. According to Dr. Harold I. Lief, studies show that--surprisingly--the housewife is subject to more mental and physical illness than the working wife. The reason: a housewife often is unable to fulfill herself and gain status in her own eyes; the weight of the marriage thus falls unevenly upon her.

The woman who stays home needs outside group contact with church, recreational or other kinds of organizations that will give her some sense of support and community. Her husband also has to recognize the serious problem she faces.

4. (a) True. According to a U.S. Department of Commerce survey, people who earn more than \$20,000 a year are more likely to stay married longer than people who make less.

5. (a) Under age 30. Statistics show that almost two-thirds of all first marriages ending in divorce do so before the wife reaches 30.

6. (b) Anger. But this emotion is only an indication of other feelings, warns Dr. Sidney Lecker. It is important to recognize what motivates the anger. An unfaithful person is often saying, "I'll show him (or her) that I can't be treated this way." Behind that anger there's usually loneliness and a desire to be loved. Seeking that love elsewhere cuses pain to both partners. But they can use the lesson of an affair to help strengthen their marriage, by trying to find what's wrong with their communication and thus improve the quality of the relationship.

7. Unfortunately, (a) yes. Studies indicate that 80 percent of men and 60 percent of women have extra-marital affairs. However, Dr. Kaplan stresses, an affair need not be the end of a marriage. At some point, vitually every relationship faces this or some other crisis, and this is both a hazard and an opportunity to deepen a couple's understanding and commitment.

The danger signal to look for is a change of feelings. Are you happy to hear his key in the door? Do you schedule a hundred chores for Saturday, just to get away from her? Change of feeling means that your marriage is not what it used to be and that it's time to look at it and at yourself. Admitting a problem is the first step toward solving it.

8. (a) True. Confessing will clear your conscience-but also ask yourself why you're confessing, advises Dr. Appleton. Is it so your spouse will stop you from doing it again? No one can stop you but yourself. Is it to be forgiven? The problem is forgiving yourself. The other person will be hurt by your confession-and for a long time. So it's usually best not to compound the problem unnecessarily by confessing it.

9. (b) False. There's no guarantee that a good sex life will save a marriage, let alone add years to it, explains Dr. Lief. Besides, a good sex life doesn't necessarily last throughout a marriage. The sexual excitement that people experience early in marriage may weaken and be replaced by boredom. A couple have to work at keeping their marriage-and sex life-exciting.

10. (a) Yes; 44 percent end in divorce. Newly divorced people usually rush right out to get married again, notes Dr. Lecker. You need to update your identity after leaving a marriage. And you can do that only by being single for a while.

11. (c) Just be available. Dr. Lecker explains that it's important to recognize what you shouldn't do as well as what you should do. Probing, unless done by a professional, can lead to more harm than good. And if you take over, you'll be denying your friend the opportunity to develop mastery over the situation. A crisis is chance for growth. So let your friend learn to master the situation on his or her own.

This Quiz has no score. But it does have winners-those people who have learned how to make their marriage work a little better.