

What is a conscious relationship?

I often refer to conscious relationships in my writings. But, what exactly, is a conscious relationship and how does one create a conscious relationship?

Here are some thoughts.

In my experience, the most important ingredient and "secret sauce" of a conscious relationship is friendship. Friendship means that you actually like the other person. In fact, in many relationships today one or the other partner might often remark that while they love the other person, they don't really like the other person. John Gottman, relationship expert, and author of the best-selling, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, says that friendship is the "secret sauce" of happy and successful relationships.

Specifically, friendship means, in Gottman's words, "a mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other's company." "Friends" know each other intimately - "... they are well-versed in each other's likes, dislikes, personality quirks, hopes and dreams."

1. Friendship

Do you actually like, respect and admire each other? Imagine spending countless hours over many years with someone you neither like nor find interesting. This often happens in relationships that were built primarily on attraction, and perhaps hope, and nothing more substantial.

2. Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills

Relationships naturally move into a power struggle stage where each of you is likely to experience your needs not being met. Learn to avoid the danger signs when arguing and to use the skills that are known to enhance communication and understanding, so you can work towards win-win solutions.

3. Self-knowledge

Clarify your own goals, dreams, and vision for your life. Find out whether your partner can and will support you in achieving and living them. See if you can align with his or her goals, dreams, and vision as well.

4. Relationship Requirements and Needs

What qualities do you need in your relationship to be happy? Focus on the qualities in the relationship that are crucial to you, rather than on the physical or personality characteristics of your partner.

5. Sufficient Time, Talk, Togetherness, and Testing

Make good use of your time together to discover your areas of compatibility, whether your requirements can be met, and whether you and your mate's behavior patterns and attitudes are ones you both can live with -- before you move into commitment.

6. Distinguish between Chemistry and Lust

Chemistry is the special energy that tells a couple they have the raw materials for success as a couple; it keeps them bonded and moving forward together. It could include physical and sexual attraction, but is not limited to these factors. The intensity of sexual attraction as the primary building block of a relationship will fade rather quickly, and will not provide the needed ingredients to overcome the power struggles and hurts that inevitably appear and reappear in a relationship.

7. Clear Choices

Step into a committed relationship with a clear sense of partnership, alignment with each other, and full assertiveness, without suppressing doubts or succumbing to external pressures. Can you align on money, and if relevant, parenting, religion, family and other important issues? Discuss them and get these handled before you move forward into commitment.

8. Prioritize your Relationship

Over time, the more you prioritize your relationship, your sense of US, the more strength and satisfaction you build into the fabric of your relationship. This can be a huge challenge later on in the relationship as work, home, family, friends, outside interests and other demands create pressures and conflict.

9. Building Trust in Yourself and in Your Partner

Learn how to create a culture of trust early on and how to keep feeding it, so when temptations that will sabotage that trust present themselves (probably when you feel most vulnerable), you can muster the strength and inner wisdom to walk away from anything that will hurt and undermine your relationship.

10. Equality

You each bring strengths and challenges, fears and areas of confidence into your relationship. Areas in which there are imbalances of power or influence, which your current methods of communication are not resolving, may need new tools and skills to ward off reactivity, resentment and sabotage. If you feel unsafe or dominated in any way, it is best to exit the relationship.

Seem like a daunting list? There are many more ingredients that could be added to the list that encompass sexual satisfaction, embracing and/or setting boundaries related to other family members or friends, and many others issues.

Working with a relationship coach can help you address these from a perspective of self and partner discovery. A coach can also help you create the forum for openly asserting and validating your requirements, needs and wants, and for developing needed relationship and communication skills.
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