

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

Relationship Advice Articles <http://www.neilclarkwarren.com/articles.html>

- [Before Looking for a Partner, Look Within Yourself](#)
- [A Checklist for Dating Success](#)
- [The Soul Mate Solution](#)
- [How to Know if Someone is Worth Dating](#)
- [My Marriage & What it means to You](#)
- [What You Really Want in a Mate](#)
- [Three Steps for Better Verbal Intimacy](#)
- [Do Opposites Really Attract?](#)
- [Beating the Odds of Divorce](#)

As a clinical psychologist, best-selling author and respected speaker, Dr. Neil Clark Warren has become one of America's best-known experts on mate selection and healthy relationships.

Dr. Warren has been hailed by Time Magazine and USA Today as a "must read" author and "outstanding contributor to the field of marriage counseling." He earned a Gold Medallion for America's best book on marriage, "Finding the Love of Your Life," which is now available in 13 languages. Other bestsellers from Dr. Neil Clark Warren include: "Learning to Live With the Love of Your Life," "Date...Or Soul Mate?" "Catching the Rhythm of Love," and "Finding Contentment." His latest book, "Love the Life You Live" with Dr. Les Parrott, was released in September 2003.

For more than three decades, Dr. Warren has counseled thousands of married couples and singles across the nation and in his private practice in Pasadena, California. Audiences of "Oprah," "The Pulse," "The Other Half," "Focus on the Family," and "Politically Incorrect" have heard the results of his research and interviews with successful couples. His premise is simple: Most failed marriages were doomed from the start because of incompatibility.

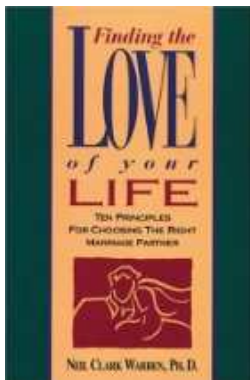
With the launch of eHarmony.com in 2000, Dr. Warren used over three decades of experience in counseling and research to create a service to help singles seeking committed and lasting relationships. This web-based relationship service is unique because participants must qualify for membership via psychological profiling based on the 29 critical dimensions Dr. Warren has identified as key to a successful relationship.

Dr. Neil Clark Warren earned his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from The University of Chicago, where he also served as a counselor and adjunct faculty member. He received his Masters of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and completed his undergraduate degree at Pepperdine University. In addition to founding Neil Clark Warren & Associates, Dr. Warren is the former dean of Fuller's Graduate School of Psychology.

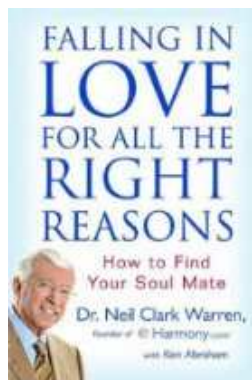
Dr. Warren and his wife, Marylyn, live in Southern California. They have three grown daughters.



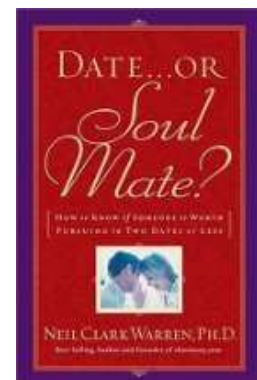
Dr. Neil Clark Warren's Books:



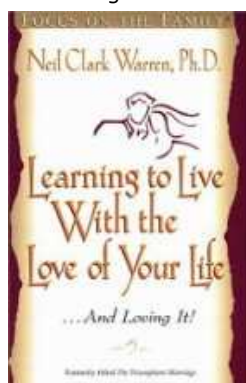
Finding the Love of Your Life: Ten Principles for Choosing the Right Marriage Partner



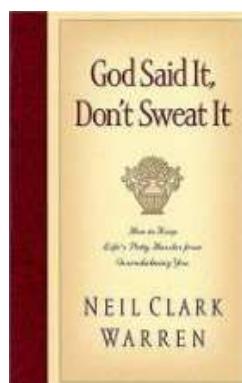
Falling in Love for All the Right Reasons: How to Find Your Soul Mate



Date...or Soul Mate? How To Know If Someone Is Worth Pursuing In Two Dates Or Less



Learning to Live with the Love of Your Life . . . and Loving It!



God Said It, Don't Sweat It: How to Keep Life's Petty Hassles from Overwhelming You



The Triumphant Marriage: 100 Extremely Successful Couples Reveal Their Secrets

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

Before Looking for a Partner, Look Within Yourself

by Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D.

Mark and Gina came to see me on a chilly, rainy afternoon. The weather outside seemed to match the mood in my counseling office when this couple plopped down on the couch across from me. Their whole demeanor was frosty and frigid.

"What brings you in for therapy?" I asked them.

They looked at each other, and then Mark spoke. "To put it bluntly, we're miserable. We've been married four years, and every day has been a challenge. We're wondering if we should even keep trying."

I asked Gina if that was the way she saw it.

"I'm afraid so," she replied. "About two days after we returned from the honeymoon, we both had the sickening feeling that we had made a huge mistake. It's been downhill since then."

As our session unfolded, Mark and Gina told a story I've heard scores of times from marriage partners in peril. After a blissful courtship, they married and almost immediately discovered vast differences. They were opposites when it came to communication style, conflict resolution, personal habits, and a few dozen other qualities that come to light when you live with someone. Somehow all these differences were pushed aside and ignored amid their initial intoxicating feelings of infatuation.

So they ended up at my office, attempting to figure out how a relationship that held such promise could plummet to the depths of drudgery.

Gina said something that day I wish every single person could hear and grasp:

"I realize now that I had no idea who I was before I got married. I was thirty years old, and I just wanted to get married while I had the chance. Mark was a nice guy who had a good job and came from a solid family. I figured, What more could a girl want? Unfortunately, I had only the vaguest notion of my deep longings, my unique personality traits, my strengths and weaknesses. And since I didn't know who I was, I didn't have a clue about the kind of person I needed for a partner."

As this couple painfully discovered, you can't select the right person to marry until you know precisely who you are-unless you're lucky. But nobody should rely on luck when it comes to a decision that determines who will be your lifetime roommate, financial partner, joint parent of every child you have . . . and ten thousand other crucial matters.

You can make a great choice of a marriage partner-and the place to start is with a careful understanding of exactly who you are. The more you know about yourself, the clearer will be your sense of inner direction when it comes to finding the love of your life. With increased knowledge about your physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual qualities, your skillfulness as a mate selector will soar. People who find dating confusing and bewildering almost always lack familiarity with themselves.

Scratch Beneath the Surface

I'm often amazed and alarmed at the lack of knowledge singles have about themselves. Whether in therapy or discussions after speaking engagements, I frequently ask single men or women to tell me about themselves. Most do well at describing external aspects of their life: "Well, I work as a computer programmer, I love to ski and roller-blade, and I'm very active in my church group." But when asked about their personality type, communication style, character strengths and weaknesses, or dreams for the future, they grope for responses: "I, uh, well . . . I guess I need to think about that some more."

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

So how do you go about understanding yourself better? There's no crash course on self-discovery, but let me offer four ways to get started:

Write in a journal or notebook every day. You don't need to write for more than ten or fifteen minutes, but it's critical that you record your honest thoughts and feelings as they come to you. The goal is to practice tapping in to your internal reservoir.

See a counselor. You don't need to be in crisis to visit a therapist. Schedule four or five sessions to explore your family background, personality makeup, and goals. You may wish to take a personality test (such as the MMPI or Myers-Briggs) and discuss the results with the counselor.

Read something every day that stimulates your internal process. For example, I read a chapter of the Bible every morning. Other people prefer poetry or psychology books or novels that explore spiritual themes. This kind of reading has a way of leading you toward the center of yourself. If you read with a personal perspective--that is, with an eye for how the writing affects you and speaks to your daily needs--you will get more deeply in touch with your inner thoughts and feelings.

Spend regular time with people who know themselves well and who encourage you to talk about what you feel most strongly. Get personal with these people. Try to understand them as best you can, and tell them as fully as possible about who you are.

The payoff for all this self-discovery and self-awareness is simple but profound: Men and women who know themselves well stand an excellent chance of selecting a mate well suited to them. Conversely, those people who are largely unaware of their inner workings make a decision as if they're spinning a roulette wheel--they cross their fingers and hope for the best.

When it comes to something as critical and all-encompassing as marriage, it's simply unwise to "hope" for the best when you can know for certain who would make the best partner for you.

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

A Checklist for Dating Success

by Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D.

A great romantic relationship can be one of life's purest pleasures. As you discover singles that share your values and attitudes, there is nothing quite like meeting and creating a loving mutual connection. But the most rewarding long-term relationships come from partners who date with a sense of purpose. They want to have fun and share themselves, but they also want to make sure that they are headed in a successful direction.

Relationship expert Dr. Neil Clark Warren has used his thirty years of clinical experience to distill a list of five "dating reminders." These reminders make for a great checklist, whether you have been dating for many months or have just met someone that you really like.

Date slowly

It sounds so simple and yet singles often feel that they are on a deadline to launch into a deep and connected relationship. Dr. Warren cites a Kansas State study that determined if a couple will date at least two years before marriage, the chances of that marriage being successful are significantly higher. Dating slowly is often a very difficult task. Physical passion can easily drive couples into a serious relationship long before they are emotionally ready. Once these connections have been made, it is very difficult to make dispassionate decisions about whether the relationship is working and should be continued.

Sometimes older singles feel that they cannot afford to waste time and move slowly. The truth is that an unhappy relationship is a thousand times worse than no relationship at all. If you want the relationship to have a chance at long term success, take it slow and easy.

Date in a wide variety of activities and situations

Many people end up married with only a narrow base of shared experience. For example, a new couple that lives four-hundred miles apart has limited time to see each other. Whenever they can get together, it feels much more like a vacation than real life. He flies in for a long weekend, or they meet in a resort town somewhere in the middle. This time spent together makes for romantic memories and great passion, but it doesn't tell either person much about how the other will react when balancing the checkbook or creeping their way through rush hour traffic.

It is vital that couples make time for everyday experiences. They have to actively spend time together enduring mundane stresses. This allows them to REALLY know whom they are dating.

Date with realistic expectations

When you consider the influence of modern media on our perceptions and expectations it isn't hard to understand why we can have overblown expectations about our romantic relationships. Little girls are often raised with visions of perfect men on white horses riding in to take them to some ideal life. Men often believe that their partner will be able to do it all: make a home, raise a family, and contribute to the family bottom-line, all while remaining pleasant and physically attractive. The fact is that life is a stressful experience. Even the best relationship doesn't magically make life easier. Don't be surprised.

Date to please yourself

We are all taught from a young age not to be selfish. It is one of the first rules that parents impose on their children. Of course, as a general rule it is perfectly acceptable. However, when it comes to whom you should date, the rules are different. In this realm, selfishness is vital to choosing a relationship partner. It is wonderful if your parents approve of your boyfriend or girlfriend. We all want our friends to like our partners. But you should always know that the choice is yours alone.

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

Date with purpose

Everyone has tendencies that are less than flattering, but serious personality flaws deserve special attention. When dating someone that you are considering for a long-term relationship, it is vital that you confront a fact that has been responsible for more marriage misery than any other. Any personal problem that exists while you date will likely not go away after you are married. In fact, it will probably get worse. The idea that problems such as alcoholism, drug dependency, temper tantrums, physical abuse, or emotional dysfunction will be resolved later rather than sooner is only wishful thinking. The time to confront and resolve these serious problems is early in a relationship. Date with an eye towards facing these issues head-on to learn if your partner is serious about making changes for the better.

These five checkpoints can be a great way to test your dating IQ. If you develop your relationship with a dedication to these ideals, you can progress confidently knowing that you are creating a solid foundation and eliminating future surprises.

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

The Soul Mate Solution

Is There One Perfect Person for You?

by Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D.

Do you think your "soul mate" is out there somewhere, that individual who can complement you and fulfill you like no one else? Is there one man or woman who is ideally suited to you? Is it your task to find this mystery person?

Surprisingly, many singles hold to the notion-either consciously or subconsciously-that there is one perfect, preordained partner for them. They were made for each other, the thinking goes, and they must simply locate this person or forever feel incomplete.

This thinking is fueled by many Hollywood love stories in which a man and woman are united after a series of near misses and obstacles. At long last, they gaze deeply into each other's eyes and embrace, usually amidst the swell of violins playing in the background or fireworks exploding overhead. And they know without a doubt that they-the two of them and only the two of them-were meant to be together.

For many of us, religious faith fosters the one-perfect-person idea. We often hear the saying, "It was a match made in heaven," implying that God handpicked a particular man and woman to be joined together. If these two somehow goof and marry someone else, they have missed God's perfect will.

I admit that the soul mate supposition is appealing. We love the notion that out of the millions of people in the world, my sweetheart and I were drawn together in a way that was totally outside of our control.

But, frankly, I think this idea is more fantasy than reality, more storybook whimsy than real-world wisdom. I don't believe that you could only be completely and blissfully happy with one person to the exclusion of all others.

Before you call me unromantic and cold-hearted, let me hasten to say this should come as great news to singles looking for a partner. After all, I hear dozens of singles every week complain about how hard it is to find a suitable partner. And if there is just one individual waiting for you out there in the wide world, the search for each other could take a very long time. If, however, there is not a "one and only" partner, a whole range of possibilities opens up.

How did I come to conclude that the soul mate scenario is a fallacy? During my thirty-five years as a psychologist, I have counseled dozens of men and women who were convinced they'd married "the wrong person," but who then went on to create top-notch relationships. Of course, I've counseled far more engaged or newlywed couples who were absolutely positive they had found their soul mate-only to file for divorce a few months or years later. But more to the point, I've worked with hundreds of people whom I knew could have been happily married to any number of people.

Perhaps most importantly, an extensive research study completed by the company I oversee, eharmony.com, revealed why some relationships succeed and others don't. This study examined five thousand married persons and especially two hundred couples who had "highly successful" marriages. We found that there are twenty-nine characteristics-including religious values, ambition, and energy level-that determine a couple's "compatibility quotient." That is, the more two partners match on these critical qualities, the better their chances of staying happily married. If a man and woman match on a preponderance of the characteristics, it's highly likely that they will have a terrific marriage.

One, Five, or Five Hundred Possible Partners?

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

A few months ago, I was talking with a couple of my staff members, let's call them Audrey and Mike, who are both in their late twenties. I posed the question, "How many people in the world do you think you could be happily married to?"

Audrey thought for a moment and then replied, "Five. I think there are about five men out there who match exceptionally well with me."

I couldn't resist giving her a good-natured jab. "There are approximately forty million single men in the U.S., and you could be happily married to just five of them? Wow, you are particular!"

She gave me a punch in the shoulder, and I turned to Mike. "Well, then, how about you Mike? How many people could you be happily married to?"

"Fifty," he said immediately. "I bet I could marry any one of fifty different women and be extremely happy."

They both looked at me and I said, "I think you're both selling yourselves short. I suppose there are five hundred-probably more-women with whom I could be extremely happily married."

"That many, Neil?" Audrey said. "Seems like you aren't particular enough."

I reminded them of the study we conducted. "Out of all the women in the world, there must be at least five hundred with whom I would match on all twenty-nine items. And there are probably thousands more I'd match with on, say, twenty-six or twenty-seven items and still be quite satisfied."

As I told my associates, I believe soul mates are made, not born. You start with the ingredients for a highly compatible, successful relationship, and then you work to develop closeness and intimacy. Does this mean you lower your standards when it comes to finding a partner? Absolutely not! It simply means you "expand your field of vision."

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

How to Know if Someone is Worth Dating

by Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D.

Being an effective and wise dater requires that you balance several separate issues. You must be assured of your own emotional health and have created a list of qualities that you want and don't want in a relationship partner. You also must have developed the ability to actively listen. Active Listening is a way of absorbing who a person is by the things they say. It's about asking questions and empathizing with their answers. This type of listening is the best way to quickly determine if the person sitting across from you is worth getting to know better.

Tell Me About Yourself

During a first date, volumes of personal information are exchanged. As a person talks about their life, they reveal what sort of people they have as friends, what their hobbies are, their level of responsibility, their anger level, their opinions on the opposite sex, etc. These clues are usually wrapped inside stories or observations, but to the person who is focused on listening they are loud and clear. It is usually best to arrange for a first date to be in a setting where you can comfortably spend time talking and sharing. When you do, you can learn enough during the first date or two to decide if this is a relationship that should move ahead.

Is That Any Fun?

Dating should be fun. Life should be fun! This fact-finding attitude doesn't mean that you interview your date, firing question after question to see if they make muster. Rather, in the course of natural conversation, be aware of what is being revealed. It is also important for singles to focus on the other person during the first few dates. We all want to make a good impression, but trying to win over someone makes it hard for us to tune in to the necessary information that is coming our way. Relationship expert Dr. Neil Clark Warren explains in his book "Date...or Soul Mate? How To Know If Someone Is Worth Pursuing in Two Dates Or Less," that "Mature dating involves questioning deeper matters-matters that determine the likelihood of a healthy, long-term match."

Becoming an Expert Observer

The best way to learn the maximum information from someone is to encourage them to talk and for you to listen. Oftentimes the most basic questions, such as "What do you like about your job?" are the most revealing. If someone spends fifteen minutes explaining how they love or hate their job, you can discern some very valuable information about their level of day-to-day happiness. Dr. Warren encourages you to start with the simple questions. "As you listen to what the person says, you can ask follow-up questions in a natural way, and you can move toward more meaningful topics. You want to discover what the person enjoys about his daily experience, whether he is happy and why."

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

While some people are skilled at talking in ways that hide their true nature, their actions invariably reveal a great deal about who they are. By the end of a first date you have experienced: a person's phone manner, their punctuality, their manners, and their respect for service employees, as well as an entire host of other behaviors that reveal their values and beliefs. Dr. Warren emphasizes assessing your date's judgment. "If the individual knows how to make consistently wise decisions, he or she will almost certainly contribute consistently to the strength and health of the relationship. So your task becomes one of 'judging your date's judgments.'"

Lastly, intuition plays a part in deciding if this person is someone you would like to continue seeing. Do you feel comfortable around this person? Can you be yourself? Even if nothing you have heard during your date seems to be a warning sign, you must still honor that feeling that says, Something is wrong. "With some people, you feel a need to live up to their expectations,

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

preferences, and strongly held opinions," Dr. Warren explains. "With others, you experience a kind of total acceptance and unconditional affirmation that sets you free at a deep and fundamental level." Attention not only to what the person says and does but how you feel at the end of the evening is the key to making a wise relationship decision.

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

My Marriage and What It Means for You

by Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D.

Marylyn Mann Warren and I were married in Santa Monica, California on March 22, 1959. For 43 years we have enjoyed what I would rate as an "A" marriage, and we have experienced the good life at a level far above any we had a reasonable right to expect.

I wish I could describe what it's like to be married to this woman. The experience of being with her is far better than I know how to put into words. But I want to try.

When I wake up and see her every morning, our relationship seems fresh and alive. We report on our night -- our sleep, our dreams, the peacefulness of our "time away" -- and I sense she listens intently to my report because she really cares. This morning she brought me some strawberries -- clean and sliced -- and the morning paper. Without speaking a word, we both try hard to sense the other person's needs and quietly meet them. She is better at this than I am, but I feel more and more motivated with the years.

She finished paying all our bills this morning. I trust her totally with every aspect of our life together. And she seems to trust me too. Our trust for one another is deeper than I know how to measure.

And she wrapped a present for our daughter's birthday this morning too. Her love for our three daughters and our nine grandchildren is as pure as falling snow. She just flat out loves every member of her family. I can't imagine having someone love "my" daughters and "my" grandchildren as much as she does.

She headed off to the gym when I left for the office for a radio interview. I was on with a woman in Louisville who was talking with me about my book, "Date...or Soul Mate?" This bright and articulate interviewer said right off that she doesn't believe in soul mates. I said, "Let me tell you about Marylyn." And when I finished with my description of what my soul mate is for me, it suddenly occurred to me that the thought of ever being without Marylyn triggers anxiety in me. When you've found your soul mate, you don't even want to imagine what life would be like without them.

I tell audiences all across the country that if anybody wants to stay single, they should be encouraged to do so. There is absolutely no theoretical requirement to marry, and we should pressure no one to think they need to be married to be "enough."

But as soon as I say this, I always reflect on how magnificent my life with Marylyn has been and is. I secretly believe that being married to your soul mate is the richest part of the human experience, an experience of heaven on earth, and I will never grow weary of rattling on about being the fortunate man who found the woman who has graced my life so lavishly all these years.

I've sometimes wondered how I was so "fortunate" to find Marylyn -- and I hope, of course, that she feels "so fortunate" too.

Maybe we have good intuition about how to select a marriage partner, but I don't really believe in "intuition." In "Finding the Love of Your Life," I argue strongly against the use of it to make a wise and prudent selection of a soul mate. But if it wasn't intuition that brought Marylyn and me together, I get really nervous. To the best of my knowledge, we didn't know enough about the rules of mate selection to make a decision that would serve us well for a year or two, let alone 43 years and counting.

And four of our six closest friends in growing up have each been married THREE times. They were at least as bright as Marylyn and I are, at least as well meaning and hard working. Why did our marriage thrive? There's no good reason -- except we blindly managed to pair ourselves with someone with whom we were, quite by chance I think, well matched.

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

As marriages around us began to crumble, and as I thought about our three daughters getting married, I desperately didn't want them to fail in this critical area of their lives. And I didn't want them to have to rely on the same good "fortune" on which Marylyn and I had so unwittingly depended.

And so, years ago, I began to look for the rules that govern good mate selection. For 35 years of clinical practice, I watched hundreds of marriages succeed or fail on the basis of the keeping of (or not keeping) these yet unknown rules. Eventually, we began to pin these rules down through our research. And now, we are deeply confident that we have a list of matching variables, of "critical rules," that make it possible for us to match two people with considerably higher odds for a lifetime of happiness.

What I passionately want for every couple that gets married through eHarmony is for them to have a marriage that is as gratifying as the marriage Marylyn and I have. You know I am not bragging when I say that we are best friends, that we have found profound meaning in our relationship and our family, that we have experienced deep joy in our life together.

We are so outlandishly fortunate. We walked over thin ice in the dark of night, and it didn't break. No one needs to count on this level of luck and chance. The rules seem so clear now. They require hard work, but I can tell you from the bottom of my heart that a soul mate relationship is worth every bit of hard work it requires. It is, on this earth, the best thing that has ever happened to me.

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

What You Really Want in a Mate

by Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D.

One of the keys to healthy mate selection is deciding what type of person you want in your life. In order to determine who will mesh with you to create a brilliant, loving, and long-term relationship, you have to spend some time examining the various human dimensions. In his book "Date...or Soul Mate? How To Know If Someone Is Worth Pursuing in Two Dates Or Less," Dr. Neil Clark Warren has highlighted ten dimensions for consideration. There is no "right" answer, but it is extremely important that you dedicate some time to establishing your preferences in these ten areas.

Intelligence There are many kinds of intelligence: book smarts, street smarts, intuitive intelligence, mechanical intelligence, etc. You may feel more comfortable with an analytical person than with someone who has a highly developed emotional intelligence. Few people would want to date someone significantly less intelligent than they are, but people with very high IQ's often have considerable difficulty interacting socially. These are all options that must be considered when determining the type of intelligence you want in your partner.

Personality The key to determining the type of personality you want in a mate is "harmony." This person's tendencies should complement your own. If you are a strong decision-maker, you may need to find a person that is easy-going and feels comfortable leaving things up to you. You can start to explore your personality preferences by examining what types of friends you currently enjoy. Do you prefer quiet, introspective people, or talkative, gregarious types? Do you prefer people who are intense or laid-back? These answers will steer you in the right direction.

Appearance Most people are pretty sure what physical traits they want in a relationship partner. But it is important to make sure that your physical requirements are your own, not just those being pushed by modern media. In addition, try not to make physical requirements "deal breakers." It may be that you prefer blond hair and Scandinavian features, but refusing to date a great person because they lack those traits may be cheating yourself out of a great relationship.

Ambition Dr. Warren explains it this way: "It is absolutely vital that two people have about the same amount of ambition if their marriage is to endure." You, no doubt, have opinions about what is workaholicism and what is laziness. If your partner doesn't share your definitions of these terms, there almost certainly will be conflicts and frustration. Decide what your level of ambition is, and look for a partner who has a similar level.

Chemistry Chemistry is that overpowering, physical urge that draws two people together. Some people value chemistry immensely when making relationship decisions, while some others can create a loving, successful relationship based on a logical decision about compatibility. Spend some time examining how important chemistry is to you.

Spirituality Spirituality refers to internal faith and beliefs. While connected to religion, it is different. In this context, religion refers to externals: things like the church you attend, what denomination you practice, what traditions and rituals you follow. Spiritual persons can often have little to do with religion. There is a great opportunity for conflict between a person who seeks answers to problems in prayer and meditation and one that solves issues by problem-solving and logic.

Character A person's character gets to the very essence of his or her being. Character reflects traits like honesty, courage, and commitment, things that are absolutes when creating a relationship. The task here is not so much to decide what character traits are important, but to discern absolutely that your potential partner has a strong character and holds your values as important.

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

Creativity Are you a creative person? If so, can you imagine spending your life with a person who is extremely analytical and logical, who doesn't understand or appreciate your unique viewpoint? If you are not particularly creative, would you enjoy living with a creative person who often falls short in other areas? It is important that your partner appreciate your creative tendencies.

Parenting Whatever your plans and dreams regarding children, it is of paramount importance that your partner agrees with you. This is often a subject that gets ignored early in the dating process, because the mention of it tends to give a certain unfavorable impression. If you do want children at any point in the future, you should try and determine what parenting skills your potential partner has. How do they act around nieces, nephews, or young children? Are you attracted to their parenting manner? Of course, if a family life is of no interest to you, you should also make that known early to avoid any misunderstanding.

Authenticity Authenticity is hard for some people. They have been raised to accommodate people and avoid disagreement. But in order to share a brilliant relationship, both partners must be themselves. Of course, the authentic path is not always the most "harmonious" path. You must come to terms with the benefits of a relationship based on the emotional stability of two people who are being true to themselves.

At the end of this exercise, Dr. Warren asks that you complete one last task. Take the ten traits discussed above and rank them in order of importance to you. It will be difficult to meet someone who is perfect for you in every single category. If you've ranked them, you will already know which are essential to you and on which you are willing to compromise.

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

Do Opposites Really Attract?

by Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D.

We've all heard it over and over again. "If you want to find a great relationship, look for an opposite." Is that really the best approach? How can someone who has a different set of values, attitudes and hobbies be so attractive?

People who are dramatically different from us are often the most attractive. This comes from a common sense approach to social relationships. Our lives are usually enriched by connections to others who have abilities that we don't have. Unfortunately, applying this lesson to our romantic pursuits is often a recipe for disaster.

"If the qualities that attract you to someone are different from your own, be cautious," says Dr. Neil Clark Warren, clinical psychologist and author of "Date or Soul Mate? How To Know If Someone Is Worth Pursuing in Two Dates Or Less." He points out that, while opposites often attract, they also usually drive each other crazy over the long haul. Dr. Warren's three decades of counseling married couples has led him to make "finding someone similar to you" one of the pillars of his relationship advice. "I don't discount how hard it is to find someone who is a lot like you. It has always been difficult, and it's become even more so as diversity increases. But when two people come from similar backgrounds, they operate from a position of strength. Their relationship is made significantly easier by all the customs and practices they have in common."

Forging a relationship with an opposite is so hard because every difference you have requires negotiation and adaptation. Accommodation and compromise will necessitate plenty of change. This change creates a kind of stress, and according to Dr. Warren, "If there are too many differences, you may not be able to survive all the strain involved in adapting to each other."

What sorts of differences cause the most trouble? When considering whether a particular person is a good relationship candidate for you, look to four specific areas:

Energy Level - If she likes to go dancing three times a week and he loves to relax on the couch most nights - look out.

Personal Habits - This includes punctuality, cleanliness, weight management, and smoking.

Use of Money - When one person wants to save for the future and the other is eager to spend and enjoy life NOW, the conflict can be deadly to a relationship.

Verbal Skills and Interests - If one person is dying for more conversation and the other wants more peace and quiet, there is a lot of stress.

Having considered all these points there is one personality trait that can mitigate the danger of a relationship between opposites. Dr. Warren calls it 'flexibility'. "This flexibility allows people to consider the differences, evaluate them, propose alternative solutions, and then resolve them. Of course, it is vital that two people be willing to compromise. When one partner bends and flexes every time, the relationship becomes unbalanced and 'out of whack.'"

So, next time you're feeling that tug of attraction to someone you know is drastically different than you, take a second look. Professor J. Phillippe Rushton of The University of Western Ontario, in his study on differences and marital happiness, put it this way: "One of the most important principles to follow in choosing a mate revolves around a highly established reality; stable and satisfying marriages usually involve two people who are very much alike."

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

Beating the Odds of Divorce

by Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D.

Divorce is one of the scariest words in our culture. Much like "cancer," it can often carry such weight as to be hard to say. Few things in this world ruin more lives or create more misery. Everyone knows someone who has had to endure a gut-wrenching break-up with his or her spouse, and many of us have our own divorce scars. In most cases, even if it is eventually for the best, divorce is a horrible thing to experience. And the fear of divorce is also a powerful force, affecting millions of single adults. In fact, fear of divorce is listed by people who are scared to commit to marriage as one of the top reasons for not getting married.

Possibly the most confounding thing about modern divorce is this: It doesn't seem to matter how smart, how educated, how wealthy, how spiritual, or how committed you are or aren't; at best, about 50% of all new marriages and 60% of all remarriages end in divorce. (Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Center for Health Statistics, Americans for Divorce Reform, Institute for Equality in Marriage, American Association for Single People, Ameristat, Public Agenda)

That's pretty darn scary.

There's a lot to be learned from this trend in divorce. Dr. Neil Clark Warren has spent the past three decades performing Divorce Autopsies to try to find out why marriages are failing and what, if anything, can be done to help give people some hope that they can avoid being a statistic. Dr. Warren has isolated several facts about divorce that are beginning to shed light on the issue:

75% of all marital breakdowns are the result of mismatching at the front end of the marriage.

90% of the persons who turn out to be maritally mismatched were simply not aware of the mismatching prior to the marital relationship.

When choosing a marriage partner, the vast majority of couples placed heavy emphasis on the chemistry between them. This chemistry has to do with appearance, and is focused on the sexual side of their relationship.

75% of the chemistry that exists early in a relationship evaporates within six to eight months if it is not undergirded by more durable compatibility.

Many of the couples reported that when they began to discover early in their relationships that it was a mismatch for them, they tried to overcome the mismatch with hard work and the mobilization of other factors like kindness, feelings of guilt, or obligation. Usually, these factors were incapable of overcoming the mismatch.

The complexity involved in finding a marriage partner is becoming greater every year. If our only response to this growing complexity is an emphasis on the need for "willpower," we will lose more and more marriages to divorce, separation, or unhappiness.

The massive collision of hard work (along with willpower and other family and societal forces) and basic mismatching is almost always, in this society at least, won by the forces of mismatching.

Dr. Warren seems to be indicating that a marriage's fate is largely determined when we pick our mate; as they say in the movie business, "It's all in the casting." So important is that one decision that a lifetime of trying to force the relationship to work with the wrong person is usually futile. As Dr. Warren puts it, "75% of your happiness will be determined by this one decision."

Dr Neil Clark Warren - Relationship Advice Articles

Making matters worse is our human nature, our natural tools for choosing a mate. We are, as human beings, wired to react to certain physical signals from the opposite sex. These triggers and attractions are primarily connected to our biological urges to reproduce and find security, and when used to pick a mate (as they almost always are) they fail to find someone who will meet our long-term emotional needs.

Dr. Warren also found that society's focus on "making the marriage work" rarely makes the marriage work. It makes people feel guilty and soldier on through an empty relationship, but it doesn't attack the root of the problem.

That is the bad news and that is the good news.

Because once we know these things about divorce, we can work to build a system to defeat them. That's what eHarmony is: a tool for defeating divorce. Dr. Warren has taken this divorce autopsy information and designed a system that does what you cannot do on your own: It delays your normal human selection criteria (that chemistry stuff we discussed earlier) and chooses people for you to meet who are truly compatible marriage partners for you.

eHarmony takes 29 human dimensions, the very traits that determine your core makeup, and matches singles who have a high level of compatibility. Each eHarmony member is able to get to know these matches in a way that helps them determine if the relationship has long-term possibility as well as romantic chemistry. We believe that this is the only way to start the marriage with the right cast members.

As the saying goes, "the definition of insanity is doing the exact same thing and expecting different results." eHarmony is here to help achieve a new level of marriage success and, with its unique process of mate selection, approach the problem of divorce in a whole new way.