

# Falling In Love For All The Right Reasons

by Dr. Neil Clark Warren

Book summary with additional text added about “Soul Mates” and text from another eHarmony article on compatibility.

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If you're looking for your soul mate, you've probably heard of eHarmony.com, the online dating service founded by psychotherapist Warren and which he claims has resulted in 2,000 marriages. Here he shares the eHarmony.com formula, which consists of 29 personal dimensions that Warren says determine long term success in marriage; they range from the obvious, like intellect, sense of humor and character, to more nuanced qualities like one's sense of curiosity and level of artistic passion. Warren evaluates how important each dimension is (e.g., "Most people with strong artistic bents simply must be paired with partners who have similar interests") and how they can affect a relationship. Warren offers real-life stories to show how these dimensions play out in relationships, describing, for instance, the tensions created by mismatched energy levels, when one partner is full of get-up-and-go and the other is a couch potato. Warren's dimensions of broad-based compatibility will ring true to those seeking not just a hot romance but a stable, long-term relationship.

## What about “Soul Mates?”

Is there such a thing? How do you define the term or recognize this person? Should we be looking for our soul mate? This is a topic that could be endlessly debated so in this context, we will say that it is two people who enjoy broad-based compatibility; they fit together. People who are a good match on the twenty-nine dimensions of a good relationship. Some other definitions of the term are:

1. A dictionary definition: One of two persons compatible with each other in disposition, point of view, or sensitivity. Someone for whom you have a deep affinity. A person temperamentally suited to another.
2. Predestination: The movie "Still Breathing" examines the thought that people are drawn together as soul mates by destiny or fate and that being with our soul mate is something we have no control over. This idea of predestination and connection even after death between soul mates was also examined in the movie "What Dreams May Come".
3. Making Life Come to Life: Richard Bach describes soul mates as "someone who has the locks to fit our keys, and the keys to fit our locks. When we feel safe enough to open the locks, our truest selves step out and we can be completely and honestly who we; we can be loved for who we are and for who we're pretending to be. Each of us unveils the best part of one another. No matter what else goes wrong around us, with that one person were safe in our paradise. Our soul mate is someone who shares our deepest longings, our sense of direction. When we're two balloons, and together our direction is up, chances are we've found the right person. Our soul mate is the one who makes life come to life. "
4. Profound Connection: Thomas Moore, in his book *Soul Mates: Honoring the Mysteries of Love and Relationship*, page xvii, describes a soul mate as "someone to whom we feel profoundly connected, as though the communication and communing that take place between us were not the product of intentional efforts, but rather a divine grace. This kind of relationship is so important to the soul that many have said there is nothing more precious in life."
5. Feeling at Ease With one Another: The belief that a soul mate is the not the ideal or one and only person in someone's life. This definition of soul mates is people who together want to work on making

their marriage a great one. Their relationship feels like a natural fit, and although they need to work on their marriage, it is not hard to do. When soul mates first meet, there is an immediate sense of being at ease and connected.

6. General Belief: Most believe that soul mates can accept and love every part of the other's personality and that life with a soul mate is easy and natural.

7. Reincarnation: Some believe that a soul mate is someone with whom a person has shared other life times through reincarnation. The soul mate could be a friend, business partner, parent, child, sibling, spouse or other family member. These soul mates can be of the same or opposite sex.

8. Other Half: Others believe, like the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, that a soul mate is a person's "other half". This concept was the basis of the movie, "The Butcher's Wife" where the idea of "split-aparts" searching for one another was explored. People all over the world believe that we are all searching for someone to make us whole and to share our journey of life with.

### **How Do Many People Choose a Mate?**

The fact is EVERY couple gets together because of compatibility. If you were painfully incompatible with a particular person, you probably wouldn't make it past the first date. Whether we know it consciously or not, most individuals are searching for approximately five dimensions of compatibility:

- Sense of humor
- Ability to be pleasantly social
- Physical attraction
- Status
- Kindness

If, in the course of several dates together, each person discerns compatibility in these five areas, a relationship is usually born. And it naturally follows that a large number of marriages are based on compatibility in these five areas as well. So when we say that almost every marriage is based on compatibility, it is this narrow compatibility that usually serves as the springboard for two people to move forward together.

For two people who are dating and living apart, these five traits may seem like enough. But with a serious relationship comes the challenges of living together, mixing finances, sharing responsibility and, often times, raising children. Over the years, each of these events turn up the level of stress between two people, and they learn sooner or later, that five dimensions of compatibility doesn't give them the stability and common ground that they need to weather the storms of life.

At that point, the success of their relationship will often hinge on whether they were lucky enough to stumble into the kind of broad-based compatibility that gives relationships extra support-the kind of compatibility they didn't even know existed.

### **So The Person Has to Be Just Like Me?**

Of course not. It would be, in fact, impossible to find someone "just like you." The idea is that every major area of your life where you and your significant other agree is like a deposit in the bank account of your relationship. And every major area where you disagree is like a withdrawal from that account. Is it okay to have several areas of disagreement? Sure. Any account can stand some withdrawals if the balance is nice and high. But if you have a large number of very different opinions in major areas of life, you're going to draw that balance dangerously low.

eHarmony once received an e-mail from a man who was pointing out how wrong this idea was. "My wife and I are practically opposite in many ways and we've been happily married for years." Because

we were curious to hear his story, we developed a friendly back and forth about his situation. When we asked about their differences, he wrote, “I like Chinese food and she likes Italian. I like football and she hates football. I like to sleep late and she gets up early.” But when it came to the more substantial things in life – values, character, curiosity, intellect, work ethic, etc., you probably won’t be surprised to learn that in every “major” dimension of marriage this man and his wife were totally in sync.

You can certainly make the argument that differences in a relationship spice things up. However, it’s easy to see that having major differences in important areas of life require continual compromise. While that may be a valuable exercise in loving sacrifice, over many years it can drain precious energy from a relationship.

## **The Universal Solvent**

High school chemistry often covers the “universal solvent,” which is a substance that has the ability to dissolve both bases and acids. It turns out that the earth’s most abundant molecule, water, has the ability to dissolve most of the compounds we find in nature. In the world of compatibility there is a kind of universal solvent. To be clear, however, the wide variety of people and the combinations that they form as couples make it impossible to identify a universal “most important dimension of compatibility.” Rather, the presence of this universal solvent makes every part of a marriage or a serious relationship more stable, supportive and enjoyable.

We call this dimension, adaptability.

If you and your partner have a deep well of adaptability in your relationship, it acts like a buffer zone between you and serious problems. It cannot make up for a significant disconnect in areas such as character, autonomy or self-concept. But even if one person is highly adaptable, the relationship often just “works.”

When two people are acting authentically in a relationship there will be times of conflict. No two honest people can agree all the time. He will want to go out and she will want to stay home. He may want to visit family and she may want to take a trip to a new place. These disagreements may be minor or major, but if both partners are committed to sitting together and saying, “How can I give on this, and how can you give on this, so we can be together on this?” the relationship will strengthen and grow with each resolution. Adaptability allows us to recognize the power and the benefit of such a compromise, and enjoy the new choice almost as much as our original preference.

Many important dimensions such as intellect, emotional energy and self-concept are established early in our lives and virtually impossible to change. Adaptability, however, can be nurtured and expanded in your relationship. By acknowledging its importance and being mindful of how it can dissolve the areas of friction, you can practice your adaptability and watch it have greater and greater impact on the “acids and bases” that you experience.

This culture tends to be satisfied with an extremely thin, narrow base of compatibility, usually settling for five main qualities: Appearance, Chemistry, A sense of humor, Status, and A front-end personality. Some people think it just happens naturally or “I’ll just know when the right person comes along”. **For many singles, the primary reason for their lack of success is because their circle of friends and opportunities is far too small. It can take many years to find a compatible person.**

Selection of a marriage partner is the most important, far-reaching decision you will ever make. For the rest of your life, everyday, you will wake up with this person; much of your day will revolve around this person in one way or another, whether you are at work or at home. This decision is so important that it should be made with great clarity and with as much wisdom, insight, and expertise as you can muster. If you do this well, you will set yourself up for the greatest experience you will ever have on earth.

Keep in mind the staggering statistics about marriage. 20% end in divorce within 5 years. 33% end within 10 years. 43% end within 15 years. In addition, of the 50% of the marriages that stay together, in half of those marriages, one or both participants will say, "I am not happy."

What about the theory that opposite attract. Yes they do often attract while dating because you tend to like and appreciate things about the other person's personality that you do not have. In marriage, however, opposites tend to attack. Especially if the relationship is co-dependent and one partner relies on the other to "fill" some part of their personality where they are lacking.

The 29 Matching Variables:

These variables are grouped into four categories.

I. Screening dimensions - designed to help you avoid troublemakers and prevent you from becoming involved with a problematic person.

II. Core personal dimensions - characteristics about you and your partner that are relatively difficult to alter.

III. Necessary skills that can be developed.

IV. Crucial qualities that can be developed.

**I. Screening dimensions - To have a truly great marriage, you must be well matched in all of these.**

**Dimension 1, Good Character** - integrity, honesty, and moral uprightness. Watch out for people who lie, exaggerate, or tell convenient truth. They tend to have no regard for the rights of others. Often these people are very attractive at first but they tend to be takers rather than givers. Watch for signs of rudeness or lack of consideration.

**Dimension 2, The Quality of Your Self-Conception (emotional health)** - A person with a good self-concept doesn't depend on anyone else to provide validation and meaning for life. They are comfortable with who they are. People with a poor self-concept may suffer unusual shyness, or the opposite. They may attempt to cover a poor self-concept through boastful behavior or bullying characteristics, outbursts of anger, or violence. The relationship between two people can be no healthier than the emotional health of the least healthy person.

People with good emotional health possess three foundational qualities:

1. A profound sense of significance - they believe that they have great intrinsic value.

2. A life of unswerving authenticity (being true to yourself) - you must understand who you are and then live in a manner that reflects who you are. There are many cases of housewives, for example, who forgo their career dreams in support of their partners pursuits and are left feeling like they missed out on life.

3. An attitude of Self-Giving - There are 3 qualities that are a natural result of unselfishness: generous with time, money, and resources, truthful almost to a fault, and kind. True love always looks out for the dignity and well-being of the other person. It seeks to give rather than to take.

**Dimension 3, Watch Out for Red Flags** - These may signify the presence of a number of problems, but most often they warn of character disorders, addictions, or neuroses. But it could also be any behavior that negatively affects your health, work, or primary relationships, yet you continue to engage in this behavior. A neurotic is a person who suffers from excessive anxiety that causes him to be incapable of handling everyday challenges and frustrations of life.

**Dimension 4, Anger Management** - A good marriage requires that you learn how to manage anger and resolve conflict. There are several inappropriate ways that anger is managed. Exploding in an aggressive way. Somatizing or allowing the anger to fester inside as bitterness and resentment. Turning anger inward and beating up your own self-image. Underhandling is anger expressed in subtle ways such as

humor or sarcasm or the use of passive-aggressive behavior. Anger is almost always a second emotion caused by hurt, frustration, or fear.

**Dimension 5, Obstreperousness** - Someone who is harsh, critical, unappreciative, difficult to please, and never satisfied. Many times these people are very good at masking their inner selves early in a relationship but they tend to be obsessed with getting what they want and may pull you into situations that you should never allow yourself to get into. Some 10 million people are thought to have borderline personality disorder. They may be very complementary but as you get more involved, you realize that they are impossible to please.

**Dimension 6, Understandings About Family** - To have children or not. How many children. What type of home environment, parenting style and acceptable methods of discipline. What about being a stepparent.

**Dimension 7, Family Background** - Look for indications that your partner's family background has been unhealthy, warped or dysfunctional in some way. Dysfunctional families tend to breed dysfunctional families. What about your partner's family members? Controlling or dependent in-laws can have a major impact on a marriage. Also, it is important to honestly address any concerns that the family members have about the marriage. Better to deal with the issues now than later after the marriage.

## **II. The Core Personal Dimensions - 16 characteristics of a person which are relatively difficult to alter.**

**Dimension 8, Intellect** - The important factor with this dimension is that both partners have a similar level of intellect. This is something that you can usually discern from a normal conversation. If not well matched in this area, one partner may become bored, communication may become difficult or one partner may talk down to the other.

**Dimension 9, Similar Energy Levels** - This can create problems when one partner is more energetic. It can show up in sexual relations, sharing workload around the house, and the types of after work activities that each partner wants to engage in.

**Dimension 10, Spirituality** - From a practical point of view, two partners will have the most satisfaction when they share the most agreement in their faith. In most cases it is best for people to marry within the same religion. Even within a particular faith such as Christianity, partners will usually fare better by marrying someone from the same denomination. It is also important to have similar levels of involvement in your faith.

**Dimension 11, Education** - Education may not have anything to do with level of intelligence but this dimension is usually important since statistics show that partners with wide differences in this area are usually not well matched. It may be that people with an orientation toward higher education also have other associated values that are important in a relationship.

**Dimension 12, Appearance** - Statistics show that only about 5% of the population are thought to be handsome or beautiful by an objective jury of observers. Most men and women are much more comfortable being matched with someone in a range of attractiveness similar to their own. Also, it helps to migrate toward people who appreciate your type of appearance. You are most likely to find acceptance and rate higher in groups of people that look like your relatives. It is also very common for someone to become more attractive as you get to know them better. The orientation at eHarmony is to encourage people to get to know each other before they meet face to face. The appearance issue then becomes less a factor.

**Dimension 13, Sense of Humor** - This is usually in the top five of every “mate shopping list”. The good news is that you do not necessarily need to be witty or able to tell jokes to have a good sense of humor. You just need to appreciate good humor and be able to share humor by laughing at the same places in life. Sharing humor seems to be one more way that partners can relate on a deeper level.

**Dimension 14, Mood Management** - Dealing with someone who suffers from mood fluctuations is tricky business. These fluctuations can be a result of diet, stress, fatigue, or a chemical deficiency. It is important to understand and discuss any significant mood swings that a potential partner may have and deal with them before marriage. Consistency is the key to a good match in this area.

**Dimension 15, Traditional Versus Nontraditional Personalities** - When two people are far apart on this dimension it can create serious problems for the relationship. Problems arise in areas such as the way each person dresses, the way that each person handles money, being spontaneous or planning oriented, neat or messy, and other lifestyle issues that have the potential to drive the partner crazy. These issues should be addressed before marriage to see if a compromise can be made.

**Dimension 16, Ambition** - Unquestionably, this is why so many people on a fast track career have trouble holding their marriages together. Two people on a similar track by contrast can be great encouragement to each other and promote increasing levels of intimacy.

**Dimension 17, Sexual Passion** - This is an area where it is important to have similar levels of desire for sexual activity. If not, one person usually feels unsatisfied and the other badgered, manipulated, and used. Also, it is preferable to want a high level of sexual passion in a relationship because it promotes intimacy. Kissing seems to be the best way to determine how you and your mate’s level of excitement will compare. You don’t want to marry someone who has a lot more or less sexual passion than you do.

**Dimension 18, Artistic Passion** - People with intense interest in the arts are best matched with people who have similar strong interests. Especially when one person is a serious or professional artist. Artistic people also tend to be loners and nonconformists maybe due, in part, to how they spend their time. They are typically out of the social mainstream due to the heavy involvement of time in their art.

**Dimension 19, Values** - Most people tend to hold their values close to their heart. You want to be aligned to your partner on any closely held beliefs or convictions such as faith, how to raise children and other ethical and character issues. But it is also important for everyday values like beliefs on saving money, and political or environmental issues.

**Dimension 20, Industry** - This is the attitude and orientation toward work. This is slightly different from energy and ambition. A person with a lot of energy may be out picking up rocks out of boredom. The ambitious person will think about what they can do with the rocks to get ahead or accomplish a goal. The industrious person will do what ever is necessary to succeed in a chosen field of endeavor.

**Dimension 21, Curiosity** - Some people are naturally curious. They sincerely want to know how things work, why people do what they do, what makes the difference between success and failure, what things look like, taste or how they feel. They ask lots of questions. They may also be frustrated when relating to people with far less curiosity or interest in the details.

**Dimension 22, Vitality and Security** - In numerous studies, results show that many men want women who look healthy and vital and women want men who can offer security. If this sounds like the traditional role of the husband as the provider and protector of the home, the answer is yes it is. And it seems to be true even among women who have achieved outstanding success in their careers. Women also prefer men with whom they can be secure enough in the relationship to be vulnerable and expose their deepest thoughts, dreams, hopes, and desires without fear of condemnation or humiliation. Women

also want to feel physically protected. The issues of vitality and security may be very important and partners should be well matched in this area.

**Dimension 23, Autonomy and Closeness** - Some people love solitude and others hate it. Some people need “space” in a relationship and others need to be close to their partner a lot. Others like autonomy simply because they do not like being accountable to anyone and enjoy coming and going as they please. A good match in this area is important for a good long-term relationship.

### **III. Skills That Can Be Developed**

**Dimension 24, Communication** - Good communication skills require three active efforts on the part of each individual in the conversation.

1. They need to get a sense of what is going on in their bodies and minds and they need to get in the habit of putting those feelings into words. Good communication allows the other person to understand what we are thinking and feeling. When these thoughts and feelings start to overlap then communication can lead to intimacy.
2. Next, you need to be able to hear and understand what the other person is saying. Real communication involves a desire to know what is going on and a willingness to invest the time and effort to do so.
3. Finally, the ability to dig deep and understand the emotion that the other person is feeling and then repeat it back to the other person, as a question to clarify or confirm the understanding, is important promote deep communication. This type of communication may also help to point out significant differences between potential partners and will help in deciding whether or not to proceed with the relationship.

**Dimension 25, Conflict Resolution** - In surveys questioning partners in great marriages about the characteristics of their marriage, over 90 percent of these marriages have significant disagreements on a regular basis. People with unique and lively personalities are bound to have disagreements but the effort that they put forth to work through the conflict actually makes the relationship stronger and both of them better people. That is why it is so important to learn how to resolve conflict rather than run away from it. This is an attitude and a skill that can be learned.

#### **Five Point Model to Handle Conflict:**

1. Conflict happens and it is OK.
2. The resolution will work best if each person has a chance to fully explain why they feel so strongly about an issue. Both partners need to fully understand and appreciate the others point of view.
3. You must pinpoint exactly what you disagree about. Sometimes it is different than you think.
4. Both partners need to come to a place where they can both compromise for the good of the relationship.
5. After a resolution has been reached, both partners need to congratulate each other for doing something valuable for their long-term relationship.

It is important for each partner to demonstrate mutual respect and show a lack of selfishness.

#### **Five Hints for Dealing with Conflict**

1. Allow each other the freedom to think and feel honestly.
2. It is more important to be heard and understood than to win.
3. Clarify your points of disagreement.
4. Maintain an attitude of give and take.
5. When you resolve a conflict - regardless of how small- pat yourselves on the back and plan a reward if possible.

6. Talk about your feelings. In situation X, when you do Y, I feel Z.
7. Each partner should rank the intensity of their feelings on a scale of 1 to 10.
8. Don't allow any form of conflict to go unnoticed or unresolved.
9. Try not to deal with conflict when tired or under the influence of alcohol. Simply back away from the discussion until there is a better time to discuss it.
10. Admit when you are wrong and acknowledge when your partner is right.

Is there a time when you walk away from a relationship due to conflict? Yes. When the same arguments happen over and over again without a resolution or there is constant arguing. It may mean that it is not a good long-term relationship.

**Dimension 26, Sociability** - People have varying degrees of interest in engaging in social activities. It is difficult in a long-term relationship for partners to be too far apart in this area. It will frustrate the social person and cause jealousy in the more introverted person. There must also be some compromise in this area when going from the single life to a married life. Too much socializing, especially with the opposite sex, can also obviously hurt a relationship. Too little contact with other people may mean that one person is withdrawing and being overly possessive because they are insecure.

#### **IV. Qualities That Can Be Developed**

**Dimension 27, Adaptability** - This dimension is important especially when there are potential problems with some of the other dimensions. Change is inevitable and inexorable over the life of a marriage. If a man or a woman can maintain some flexibility, roll with the punches, and adapt to various unforeseen circumstances of life, they have a much better chance of handling the stresses and strains that every marriage is bound to encounter. Adaptability stems from a good solid self-concept. Knowing that you are a person of value and not being tied to what you do allows you to be more flexible. You can change yourself when necessary or at least tolerate your partner's differences.

**Dimension 28, Kindness** - This quality consistently ranks second on a list of most important qualities. Men rank vitality as number one and women rank security as their first quality. It carries such importance because the demonstration of kindness on a consistent basis is a great indicator of a strong vein of goodness in a person. The truly great marriages are those in which both partners express, reciprocate, and appreciate kindness.

**Dimension 29, Dominance versus Submissiveness** - In marriage, the relationship often works best when one person is somewhat dominant and the other is slightly submissive. Extremes at either end of the spectrum tend not to work well because they either wind up going to war with each other when they are both strong or they gradually put each other to sleep if they are both submissive. Relationships are also strained when one partner is either extremely dominant or submissive.

The key to using these 29 dimensions is that while it is not necessary to match perfectly in all 29 areas, each of these areas should at least be examined so a decision can be made, in areas where there are differences, whether you are willing to live with the difference for the rest of your life. Also, it may take up to 2 years to fully understand everything that you need to know to make the decision.

#### **Chemistry - The Key Factor**

This term may be defined as certain physiological responses that take place in your body when you meet a person with whom you have chemistry. These responses may be different in each person and they are very hard to define. Things like a raised skin temperature, increased heartbeat and enlargement of the pupils are all typical responses. Many of these responses lead to sexual passion. Without it, the other person may only qualify as someone who is a good friend and very much like you in many ways. The only way to determine chemistry is to spend time with the other person. The opposite may also be true.

It is possible to have chemistry with someone but not be compatible in an acceptable number of the 29 dimensions. It could be great for sex but not very good for a long-term relationship.

## **Commitment - The Glue That Keeps It All Together**

Can you ever really know a person well enough to make an unconditional commitment of your life to him or her? Unconditional commitment is the only environment that holds a couple together during those difficult periods that come in every marriage. Commitment allows trust and intimacy to develop.

### **Seven Checkpoints Before You Say, "I Do"**

1. Take plenty of time to evaluate your relationship before you get married. One or two years may be best.
2. Make sure that you are the right age to get married. The divorce rate for 21 year olds is twice that of 25 year olds.
3. Beware of overeager. This may cause you to overlook the facts of the relationship.
4. Make yourself happy and don't get married to make someone else happy.
5. Make sure that you have a broad spectrum of experiences with the other person so that you can see how the relationship will work in as many situations as possible.
6. Make sure that your expectations are realistic. Every good marriage takes work. Be sure that you understand what it will take and that you are willing to do it.
7. Address any character issues, behavioral problems, or personality quirks before getting married.
8. Be clear about what you are signing up for when you get married. You promise to love, honor, cherish, forsake all others, and perform all duties under every kind of circumstance as long as you both shall live.

### **Some Secrets to a Great Relationship**

1. It is important to know clearly who you are. How do you do this?
  - a. Play 20 questions. Write a paragraph in answer to the following questions:
    1. Who is the most important person in your life, and why?
    2. What is the one dream for your life you most look forward to achieving?
    3. Who has the capacity to make you angrier than anyone else in your life, and what in particular does he or she do to make you angry?
    4. Who has the capacity to make you feel loved more than anyone else in your life, and what in particular does he or she do to make you loved?
    5. What is it like being you? More precisely, how do you feel about yourself - physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually?
    6. When do you feel inspired? Who and what contributes to your sense of inspiration? How does it feel when you are inspired?
    7. What is the most important thing in the world to you?
    8. If you had only one day to live, how would you spend it?
    9. When do you feel most afraid?
    10. If you could accomplish only one thing during the rest of your life, what would it be?
    11. What bores you? What always bores you, and what never bores you?
    12. How important is money to you? How much time do you spend thinking about it, and what income level do you aspire to?
    13. What is the role of God in your life? Do you believe there is a God, and if so, what is God like in relation to you?

14. In order, what are your three strongest interests?
15. Who is your biggest enemy, and precisely how and why did this person become your enemy?
16. How important is food to you? Do you think of it very often, and do you feel disciplined in your management of food intake?
17. Does the idea of being married to the same person for the rest of your life sound appealing to you - or not so appealing? What is there about it that you would especially like or dislike?
18. Do you think of yourself as an emotionally healthy person? In what ways are you especially healthy, and in what ways could you use improvement?
19. What is the role of conflict in your life? Do you argue or fight very much with the people closest to you? How does it usually turn out?
20. What specifically would you like your closest friends to say about you at your funeral?

- b. Discuss your answers. A friend or family member may be able to give you some insight into your answers and help you see if you are being honest with yourself.
- c. Draw your family tree. Jot some notes on each of the members of your family and how that information relates to you. Choose two or three relatives that had the biggest impact on you and expand your notes on them. It may give you some additional insight into how your own attitudes, understandings, and values developed.
- d. Review your history in five-year segments. Imagine a conversation with yourself at each age and ask the younger self to tell you what it was like being a person during that time.

**Fifty Item List of Helpful Marriage Similarities (It is best to have close to 40 of these things in common)**

1. Socio-economic background of family
2. Intelligence
3. Formal education
4. Verbal skills
5. Expected roles for both persons within the marriage
6. Views about power distribution within the family
7. Desired number of children
8. When a family should be started
9. Child-rearing views
10. Political philosophy
11. Views about smoking, alcohol, and drugs
12. Amount of involvement with in-laws
13. Sense of humor
14. Punctuality
15. Dependability
16. Desire for verbal intimacy and ability to intimate
17. The role of conflict and how to resolve it
18. The way to handle anger
19. How friendships with the opposite sex should be handled
20. Expected amount of privacy and rules for its use
21. Level of ambition
22. Life goals
23. Attitudes about weight
24. Religious and spiritual beliefs and preferences

25. Amount of church involvement
26. Family spiritual involvement
27. Hobbies and interests
28. Type of music enjoyed
29. Energy level for physical activities
30. Sexual drive and sexual interest
31. Amount of income to be spent and saved
32. How money should be allocated (clothes, vacations, etc.)
33. Amount of money to be given away and to whom
34. Degree of risks to be taken with investments
35. Attitudes about cleanliness (house, clothes, body, etc.)
36. Ways of handling sickness
37. Health standards - when to see a doctor
38. Interpersonal and social skills
39. Amount and type of social involvement preferred
40. Geographical area in which to live
41. Size and style of house
42. Type of furniture and decorations
43. Amount and type of travel preferred
44. How to spend vacations
45. How to celebrate major holidays
46. How much time to spend together
47. When to go to sleep and when to get up
48. Temperature of home during the day and night
49. Activity during meals (talking, TV watching, etc.)
50. Television programs preferred

## **81 Traits and Values of a Partner**

Editor's Note: eHarmony has a section on the website where you think about and record what they call "Must Haves" and "Can't Stands". The purpose of the exercise is to have you clearly identify positive traits and values that your partner must have. You also identify negative traits and values that your partner cannot have. This information is then used as part of the process of selecting compatible dating partners. The list below represents all of the positive and negative traits and values listed in these tests. Some of the negative traits and values have been restated in a positive way.

This list can be used in 2 ways. First, it can be used in the same way that eHarmony uses it. Look at the traits and values and decide which ones you must have in a partner and which ones, when stated in a negative way (ex. – Lacks a sense of humor) you cannot stand. Secondly, and maybe more importantly, I prefer to use the list as a collection of traits and values that I want to have or develop in order to be the best partner that I can be.

### **Traits:**

- 1) Chemistry – I must feel deeply in love with and attracted to my partner.
- 2) Communicator – I must have someone who is good at talking and listening.
- 3) Sense of Humor – I must have someone who is sharp and can enjoy the humorous side of life.
- 4) Verbal Intimacy – I must know that my partner is sharing their deepest emotional thoughts and desires.

- 5) Emotionally Healthy – I must have a partner who is emotionally healthy, and able to share a stable life with someone else.
- 6) Strong Character – I must have a partner who is honest and strong enough to do the right thing.
- 7) Artistry – I must have a partner who has a passion for music, literature, drama, art, and the finer things in life either as a spectator or a participant.
- 8) Kindness – I must have a partner who is gentle and kind.
- 9) Education – I must have someone whose educational achievements match my own.
- 10) Organized – I must have a partner who values structure in their life.
- 11) Exciting – I must have someone who isn't afraid to take a risk and who sees life as an adventure.
- 12) Patience – I must have someone who can handle life's frustrations or momentary setbacks with a patient, steady, demeanor.
- 13) Tolerant – I must have a partner who is able to hear and appreciate divergent viewpoints.
- 14) Conflict Resolution – I must have a partner who will work to resolve rather than win arguments or conflicts within our relationship.
- 15) Attractiveness – I must have a partner who is considered "very attractive" by most current standards.
- 16) Personal Habits – I must have a partner who maintains high standards of personal hygiene, orderliness, and other personal habits.
- 17) Affectionate – I must have someone who is comfortable giving and receiving affection.
- 18) Industriousness – I must have someone who is willing to work hard at whatever they do.
- 19) Energy Level – I must have someone whose energy level matches my own.
- 20) Emotionally Generous – I must have a partner who enjoys people and is generous with his or her compassion, attention, sympathies and love.
- 21) Intellect – I must have a partner who is bright and can share my understanding of the world as well as enjoy discussing important issues.
- 22) Self-Confident – I must have a partner who knows and believes in himself/herself throughout life's ups and downs.
- 23) Unassuming – I must have someone who is able to accept criticism, and even admit to being wrong sometimes.
- 24) Able to Accept Help – I must have a partner who is willing to accept outside help for personal or relationship issues that are serious and important.

- 25) Curiosity – I must have a partner who is hungry for new information and knowledge and who strives to learn as much as possible.
- 26) Loyal – I must have someone I can count on to always support me.
- 27) Adaptability – I must have a partner who is able to adapt to life's surprises.
- 28) Vanity – I must have someone who is not overly interested in their physical appearance.
- 29) Dependence – I must have someone who is not dependent on me for their happiness.
- 30) Lying – I must have someone who is honest with me and others.
- 31) Cheating – I must have someone who does not take advantage of people.
- 32) Cynicism – I must have someone who is not scornful of the motives or virtues of others.
- 33) Anger – I must have someone who is able to manage their anger and does not yell or bottle it up inside.
- 34) Self-Centered – I must have someone who is more outwardly focused on the needs of others before himself/herself.
- 35) Rude – I must have someone who is polite and honors others.
- 36) Unhappy at Work – I must have someone who is happy with their work.
- 37) Materialistic – I must have someone who does not see items as measures of success.
- 38) Denial – I must have someone who is willing to accept blame and see fault in their own actions.
- 39) Workaholic – I must have someone who does not put work above all else in their life.
- 40) Lazy – I must have someone who does not spend excessive time sleeping or resting.
- 41) Worrier – I must have someone who keeps things in perspective and does not worry too much.
- 42) Intolerance – I must have someone who is not self-righteous.
- 43) Victim Mentality – I must have someone who does not see themselves as a victim.
- 44) Grudges – I must have someone who easily forgives others.
- 45) Mean Spirited – I must have someone who is kind to others.
- 46) Petty – I must have someone who is not constantly focused on perfection.
- 47) Boorishness – I must have someone who is not inclined toward vulgar or disrespectful behavior.
- 48) Physique – I must have someone who respects and maintains their body.

49) Gambling, Drugs, Alcohol – I must have someone who does not engage in or overuse these vices and who does not have other addictions.

50) Intruding Family/Friends – I must have someone who is able to appropriately control intrusions by family members and friends.

## **Values**

1) Autonomy – I must have a partner who will give me space to be my own person.

2) Family Life – I must have a partner who is committed to marriage, home, and family.

3) Shared Interests – I must have someone who is willing to share interests and passions.

4) Style and Appearance – I must have someone who cares about the way they look and dress and has a sense of personal style.

5) Shared Politics – I must have someone who has political beliefs which are the same or similar to my own.

6) Spirit of Volunteerism – I must have a partner who shares my willingness to volunteer and support community and/or social causes.

7) Children – I must have someone who shares my desire for family and my feelings toward children.

8) Parenting Style – I must have someone who shares my views about how to raise children.

9) Parent Care – I must have someone who is willing to help me take care of my parents, now or when the time comes.

10) Staying In – I must have a partner who enjoys staying together and having quiet evenings alone or with close friends.

11) Sociability – I must have a partner who loves to socialize with different people.

12) Spirituality – I must have someone with a similar deep commitment to spirituality, who shares my beliefs.

13) Religious Practice – My partner must be committed to being an active member of my church.

14) Spiritual Acceptance – My partner must accept and respect my spiritual beliefs.

15) Responsible – My partner must be financially responsible.

16) Ambition – I must have a partner who shares my desire to achieve financial and/or career goals.

17) Relaxed – I must have a partner who is able to not stress about money and focus on the important parts of life.

18) Abstinent – I must have a partner who has saved himself/herself sexually for marriage.

19) Traditional – I must have someone who has similar sexual needs.

- 20) Sexually Knowledgeable – I must have someone who is mature and is able to express himself/herself freely.
- 21) Passionate – I must have someone who is willing to explore our sexual desires with passion and understanding.
- 22) Punctuality – I must have someone who respects others people’s time.
- 23) Flirts – I must have someone who relates to the opposite sex in an appropriate manner.
- 24) Racist – I must have someone who respects and honors people of all races.
- 25) Hypocrite – I must have someone who does not hold a double standard for their actions and those of other people.
- 26) Gossip – I must have someone who does not engage in inappropriate conversation about other people.
- 27) Judgmental – I must have someone who does not have a critical, fault finding attitude.
- 28) Pornography – I must have someone who does not engage in pornography.
- 29) Arrogant – I must have someone who is not obnoxious or cocky.
- 30) Extremely Shy – I must have someone who is open and willing to share and engage.
- 31) Fidelity – I must have someone who is willing to make a life-long commitment to me.