The “Hell Yes!” New Relationship Checklist

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When you first fall in love—yes, even during a worldwide pandemic!—you’re a smile on two legs, kickin’ it on cloud nine. You’ve met “The One,” and no pandemic or other cataclysm can stop the flow of feel-good hormones from flooding your brain. Your insatiable lust is fueled by testosterone and estrogen, your physical attraction is driven by hits of dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine, and your emotional attachment is formed through a regular cascade of vasopressin and oxytocin, whenever you make love. Together, these hormones are responsible for bringing human bodies together to ensure the continuation of our species, so they’re not something to mess with. Your brain is on the most powerful drug cocktail known to humankind.

While under that influence, you can make all kinds of sudden decisions that you wouldn’t otherwise make. In order to help you decide whether to take two steps back or jump in with both feet, we’ve come up with a list of 20 questions to ask yourself about what you observe and how you feel, in your new relationship.

The first 10 questions should all inspire the answer, “Hell, YES!!”

…And the second 10 questions should all make you say, “Hell, NO!!”

If you find yourself answering “No” to 3 or more of the first ten questions, and answering “Yes” to 3 or more of the second ten questions, perhaps you should re-think your decision to go “all in” with your relationship, for the present. …It would be a great idea to discuss those questions with your new partner, to see if those areas can be improved.

This is not an exhaustive list, but these are some of the most important things that we’ve noticed over our decades in our practice.

Is Your Answer “Hell Yes”?

1. Are your needs perceived and treated as just as important as your partner’s?

2. Does your partner ask for your opinion on matters that are important to you, and consider them to be valid, and worth acting upon?

3. Do you admire, respect, and care about the other person, and have their best interests at heart…and do you know that the feeling is 100% mutual?

4. Are you able to create a win-win in a conflict, where you can both get some needs met?

5. Do you enjoy each other’s company so much that you look forward to seeing each other at the end of each day?

6. Does your partner treat strangers with kindness?

7. If you have unresolved issues which are *not* deal-breakers, can you either accept them, or work around them? (For example, you might have to accept a less-than-ideal living situation that can’t change due to custody arrangements with an ex.)

8. Can your partner take “no” for an answer?

9. Can you deal with problem issues openly, rather than sweeping them under the rug?

10. When the going gets rough, will your partner be willing to seek outside help?

Bonus Question:

11. If you have children or a child, is your partner willing and able to become a supportive and loving figure in your child’s life?

Is Your Answer “Hell No”?

1. Has your partner ever abused you (a) physically, (b) emotionally, (c) financially or (d) sexually?

2. Does your partner refuse to take any ownership for personal faults, or for any conflicts that you have, or for any problems that occur?

3. Are there any substance-abuse or other types of addiction issues that are not being managed?

4. Does your partner make a habit of criticizing you? (Other than outright name-calling, this can feel like your partner’s feedback is attacking or personal, rather than constructive.)

 5. Do you often feel like you’re “walking on eggshells” or “getting in trouble” for minor things that can be easily addressed (or simply let go)?

 6. Does your partner make you feel that any conflict might end the relationship?

7. When you get into a conflict, are you often attacking each other’s character, rather than attacking the problem?

8. Do you feel that your partner is intensely jealous or controlling?

9. Do you feel like you have to change yourself in any significant way, in order to maintain your partner’s interest?

10. Are you the only one who’s always “trying to make the relationship better”?