



Making a Relationship Shopping List

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Finding a suitable partner can be tough when you don't know what you're looking for. Even though it's impossible to find someone perfect, you need a personal "shopping list" of the traits you want your partner to have. Good men and women are out there, so don't shop in the bargain basement. Be selective! Some people are more selective when buying a car than when choosing a lifelong partner.

Avoid the trap of convincing yourself that a bad relationship is better than none at all. People who are in dysfunctional relationships are often very lonely and unhappy because they have partners who are emotionally absent. In abusive relationships, put downs, negative messages and fear erodes self-esteem. Decide what you're looking for and don't settle for less!

Exercise: Decide What You Want In A Partner

★ **Step 1:** Put a check beside each of the items you believe describes your partner or the type of partner you would like to have.

My ideal partner or current partner . . .

- enjoys being around people and enjoys private time.
- is forgiving of others.
- is able to show affection to persons of the same sex.
- is able to show affection to persons of the opposite sex.
- expresses anger in appropriate ways (no yelling, violent behavior, sarcasm or put downs).
- is affirming of others, gives positive feedback and offers support.
- is able to initiate conversation about a variety of topics.
- expresses feelings appropriately.
- listens to others and hears what they have to say.
- is able to discuss sexual issues.
- is open to counseling if needed.
- believes people are more important than material things.
- has a good sense of humor.
- is honest in the workplace and in relationships.
- believes monogamy is important in a committed relationship.
- has a history of stable employment (no more than four jobs in the past five years, worked at most jobs more than two years, did not leave one job before obtaining another one).
- avoids casual sexual relationships.
- has a positive self image.
- can respect the needs and boundaries of others.

- takes the feelings of others into consideration.
- has income that is adequate for most personal needs and wants.
- enjoys having time to himself or herself.
- tries to look his or her best most of the time.
- has the tendency to put things off until the last minute.
- makes good decisions based on rational judgement.
- has specific goals for the future.
- is trustworthy and dependable.
- is an organized person.
- generally has a positive outlook.
- is a happy person most of the time.
- knows how to play and have fun.
- has never been in trouble with the law or on the job due to drinking, sexual misconduct, violent behavior or other impulsive behaviors.
- is comfortable with conflict and does not avoid it.
- is physically fit and exercises regularly.
- considers himself or herself to be intelligent and competent.
- is a calm and relaxed person.
- asserts him or herself but does not retaliate when someone treats him or her unfairly.
- is attractive.
- is a reasonable, logical person most of the time.
- is a good loser.
- does not consistently blame others when things go wrong.
- is a patient person.
- makes friends easily.
- laughs easily.
- is not defensive when someone makes a critical comment about him or her.
- is quick to help others who are in need.
- is not easily discouraged.
- uses his or her talents well.
- is usually well liked by others.
- has good self-control.
- is not fearful about the future.

- ★ **Step 2:** After checking all items that describe your partner or preferences for a future partner, rank the top ten items in order of importance.
- ★ **Step 3:** In the space provided, make yourself a detailed shopping list of traits you want your partner to have. Be specific and take into account your values, priorities and the traits of a healthy relationship. How do the items on your list compare to the list of healthy traits on page 6 and 7?

My Relationship Shopping List

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

- ★ **Step 4:** Put a star beside items on your relationship shopping list that are non-negotiable. Some items on your list may be important, but are not traits that would rule out a potential partner. Non-negotiable traits are those a potential partner *must* have in order for you to consider him or her for a relationship.

Exercise: Your Shopping List And Your Relationship History

1. How closely do past and/or current partners fit your relationship shopping list? List the partners who possessed all the traits you marked as non-negotiable. Are you making good relationship choices or are you settling for less?

2. In past relationships where partners didn't possess the non-negotiable traits on your shopping list, what was the impact on the relationship?

3. Look at the entire list of traits. Which traits are descriptive of problems you've encountered in previous relationships?

4. What items on your shopping list will make it less likely you will make an unhealthy choice?

The most important points to remember in relationship choices are:

- Decide what you want in a relationship and don't settle for less!
- You're better off alone and waiting for a good relationship than to be in one that's unhealthy or toxic.
- Approach relationships from a position of strength and personal power by knowing the positives you have to offer.
- Be proactive rather than waiting and hoping someone will decide to choose you. If you are passive and take whatever comes your way, you're more likely to find yourself in a toxic relationship. **You be the one to choose!**