

# Three's a hitch

Three is a significant number in relationship terms. Once you reach the three-year milestone in a relationship it's time to start asking some serious questions about where it's going and whether it should indeed be going anywhere.

But why does this tend to happen at the three-year point?

The first year of the relationship you are in the honeymoon period; the second you are trying to really and truly get to know each other; and by the third year, the potential cracks will start to show.

So that's why the three-year point is a good time to be doing an evaluation. Where is the relationship going? And should it be going anywhere if it's not a growing and positive experience for both partners?

It's important to know what determines whether people should be in the relationship for the long haul or be saying thanks, it was fun and now it's goodbye.

People's ability to grow with each other is the determining factor. If by the third year in your relationship you are on the receiving end of a lot of criticism from your partner and feel they are trying to change you, but not willing to look at their own possible shortcomings in the evaluation, alarm bells should start to ring.

People need to check in with each other at this stage and be honest about what they want. Even though the relationship might be going well and you're having fun, if you don't want the same things it's going to diverge at some point.

Commitment phobia is sometimes cited as a reason a relationship doesn't develop into a permanent long-term one. The C-word is supposed to strike fear into Generation X and Y males, yet it's more a case of men having more lifestyle choices than women.

Whereas women who wish to have children have a finite number of years in which to do so, there's no such biological gun at a man's head. The thinking may be that he can always do these things at some point, so what's the hurry?

Research shows that long-term relationships survive because people work at them and because they are underpinned by friendship and respect for each other.

Intimacy (a broader concept than just sex) is another vital component of a successful long-term relationship. There has to be desire, and the need to be close to the other partner.

It involves a lifetime of work if you want to reap the benefits of a successful long-term relationship.

## Survival tips

- **Relationships should be examined and evaluated after three years**
- **Even if you're having fun, if you don't share the same goals the relationship is likely to unravel at some point**
- **Friendship, respect, intimacy and hard work are the bywords of long-term successful relationships.**