

# Going the distance

What's the secret to establishing a relationship that can work in the longer term?

There is no one clear answer, but there are important elements that, put together, indicate the kind of relationship that is likely to go the distance.

In Western culture, chemistry between two people in the early stages of a relationship is often valued above other qualities. We often believe if there's no spark, it's not going to be worth the effort.

Once that box is ticked, the serious stuff begins. Being able to accept differences in your partner is important so that you can both develop a strong sense of who you are in the relationship.

Some couples are tempted to become a carbon copy of each other because sameness feels safer than struggling with differences in your partner. But it's the differences that help to light the spark in relationships – remove them and boredom would quickly set in.

You need to find an equal and respectful balance between your own needs and your partner's needs, and the responsibility you both bear to keep this relationship nurtured and safe.

Many people feel a natural desire to share their life with a partner. Whether you view embarking upon a relationship as a risk or not can be influenced by your age.

When we are young we don't tend to be as cautious about the risks as when we are older, with broken-heart experience.

But all ages appreciate the early romantic stages of a relationship. What maturity gives you is the wisdom to know that romance and the early excitement of a relationship must evolve into a complex appreciation of each other.

This certainly doesn't mean that you shouldn't enjoy the romance, but you know that you need time and knowledge to develop trust in your partner.

Once the relationship is well established, romance can morph into a deeper intimacy, and a shared history becomes part of the relationship.

Just ask those who have achieved vintage love. They will probably tell you all the things that irritate them about their partner – and what a marvellous person he or she is.

There's no contradiction, simply acceptance that a long relationship means acceptance of difference, intimacy and companionship, rather than the excitement of mere romance. That's worth striving for.

## Survival tips

- **All ages love romance, but older people may be more wary of embarking on serious relationships**
- **Accepting differences between yourself and your partner is a key element in getting a relationship to work**
- **Find the balance between your own needs, your partner's needs and what you both need to contribute to the relationship.**