

Love conquers all? Well, almost

Our Romeo and Juliet have spied each other across a crowded room and they definitely fancy each other. Cupid's arrow is busily at work, spurring them on to making contact.

As the evening ends, they know they are attracted to each other. There is good chemistry between them and a relationship appears to be a distinct possibility.

But there's a slight snag. While Juliet seems to be the sun in Romeo's romantic universe (and vice versa) they really don't have a clue whether they are meant for each other.

Can our hopeful couple develop a relationship that will stand the test of time, beyond the immediate connection?

First they need to decide what makes a good relationship. In simple terms, a good relationship is one that makes both partners happy.

This occurs when both partners regard each other as very special people who really want to spend time together and make a real effort for each other.

It involves talking, feeling that they want to meet each other's needs and that the other person hears what their partner has to say.

Sharing beliefs and values is very important, but it's fine to have differences with each other because you are individuals.

The old saying about opposites attracting can be very real here. In a good relationship you believe that you can learn something from your partner so that you can accomplish more than you can as individuals.

Chemistry is vitally important, and there needs to be good sex – if your partner looks good on paper but you don't feel the all-important chemistry and possibility of a good sexual relationship, something is missing and you should keep searching.

The essence of a good relationship is staying connected with the other person, and walking and talking together is part of building the relationship.

It's only by living through certain experiences together that you get to know that you can rely on each other.

Going through hard times together and coming out the other side helps you build stability and gives your relationship a strong basis. When differences of opinion inevitably arise, it's important to keep talking about them.

If you stop talking because you think the other person isn't hearing you, the differences will build to a point where they can seem insurmountable.

Once you get through the first 18 months of a relationship the rose-coloured glasses are off and you are down to the nitty-gritty. It can go in stages – in the first three months you are on your best behaviour and showing only your good sides.

In the next six months the veneer of perfection slips a little and you both have a chance to see each other when you're grumpy and less than perfect.

Often at the end of six months there is some sort of crisis or blow-up and if you survive this and can consolidate your relationship for another three months, it's viable.

Building a long-term relationship takes about twelve months, while the “happy hormones” tend to keep flowing through the system for about 18 months. Don’t make the mistake of thinking love conquers all.

There are lots of myths about relationships, including “if we truly love each other, we won’t have problems”.

Or the one about if you strike problems you can always sort them out yourself and never need to bring in a third party because that would be airing your dirty washing in public, and what would anyone else know about your problems anyway?

The reality is that relationships always strike difficulties because we are human beings. It’s only by working through these difficulties that we can test the strength of our relationship and know it’s something we can rely on.

Survival tips

- **Prioritise your couple relationship and dedicate time to it**
- **Keep talking to each other**
- **Have fun and enjoy a laugh together.**