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Your 10 Point Checklist For A Thriving Relationship

Certain things are non-negotiable.



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There are an infinite number of “types” of relationships in the world. All different people from all different backgrounds with all different circumstances. Relationships themselves are beautiful in their uniqueness, *as no two are ever the same.*

Different parts of us shine when we're with different people, and the chemistry (quite literally) changes as well. The way you “mix” with someone is what dictates the nature, vibe, and health of the relationship...or lack thereof.

With *so many different people and matches* in the world, how could we ever find universal answer to the question: “What makes a relationship thrive?”

I believe that *no matter who you are, or where you're from...or what you did...* (who got the reference?), there are universal pieces of the relationship puzzle that, when put together properly, will help you thrive and flourish as individuals *and* as a couple.

1: Healthy communication.

Let's lead with the obvious one, shall we?

We all know that a relationship can't thrive if two people don't understand each other, and they can't understand each other unless they communicate...

But, it has to be *the right kind* of communication.

Honest communication. Judgment-free communication. Consistent, calm, and rational communication. The kind of communication that seeks to

collaborate and bring two people together, rather than “trap” them, or sound suspicious, or raise doubts.

The way that two people choose to communicate with each other can influence the entire course of the relationship. It can help to solve problems, or avoid them altogether — but, it can also cause or exacerbate problems.

It can highlight your similarities, or your differences.

It can bring you closer together, or push you further apart.

Healthy communication will empower you to move your relationship forward, but without it, nothing else listed below is going to matter.

NOTE: This is not to suggest that thriving couples *don't* argue or disagree — on the contrary, *all* couples have their ups and downs (more on this in point #6), so it's not a matter of whether or not it's going to happen...

It's a matter of *how you both choose to handle it* when it does. Healthy communication empowers you to work through your challenges as a team and to keep the focus on the problem itself.

2: Shared goals for the future.

Two people in a relationship should absolutely each have their own individual goals, dreams, ambitions, and passions. I believe that this helps keep us connected to *ourselves* and building a sense of fulfillment and confidence through achievements.

I also believe that thriving relationships are more about “we” and less about “me.”

It's important that while looking into the future as a couple, we see one that excites us. One that we are looking forward to building, to creating, to *living...together*.

Creating and working towards shared goals is a bonding experience, and it helps keep you focused on what you're working to accomplish *together*.

Just as a person can easily end up lost when they become disconnected from their purpose, so can a relationship. When you lose sight of *why* you're together or *what* you're working towards, it's very easy to begin questioning if this really is the right path (or person) for you.

Couples that thrive, particularly early on, know where they're going and are certain that they've got the best possible partner by their side to help them get there.

3: Mutual emotional support.

Your partner should feel like a safe haven for you from the chaos of life — not another source of stress and anxiety.

The feeling of emotional support, of *compassion*, of knowing that your partner is always going to be there to catch you when you fall, is one of *immense importance* if you want your relationship to last for decades to come.

Without it, you'll start seeking other forms of support when you need it — I'm not suggesting infidelity, but perhaps support from friends, or family

members, or colleagues — and while, yes, those people should also always support you, they cannot (and should not) serve as a “replacement” for your partner.

One of the many unspoken promises that we make to each other when we enter a monogamous relationship is that we’re going to stand by our partner during the good *and* the bad. The thick and thin. “In sickness and in health,” as it were.

This is a commitment of support. Encouragement. Lifting each other up. Easing their pain. Enhancing their joys.

If you can’t count on someone to be that person for you, it will only lead you down a road of feeling even more lonely and despaired than if you had stayed single.

4: HUMOR AND FUN.

The capital letters were *not a mistake*.

You cannot — nor should you want to — spend eternity with somebody that *you can’t have fun with!*

Listen, we all know that life has more than its share of challenges, hardships, struggles, and pain.

Life is serious business, so why choose a person who’s just going to add to the weight of the world?

Of course, *too much* humor or its presence in inappropriate times isn't helpful, nor is it what I'm suggesting — but someone who you can laugh with, have fun with, be playful with, and flirt with is someone who's going to help make each and every day more enjoyable.

Isn't that the point of being in a relationship? To be with someone who *enhances* your life, not who complicates it.

A sense of humor is attractive in both men and women, but it also enables you to ease life's pain, as well as magnify life's joys. It serves as medicine, it brings you both together, and it makes any experience more memorable.

Love is at its best when you can laugh with someone who you take seriously.

5: Physical and emotional intimacy.

I'm putting both of these together because just having one or the other isn't going to be enough to hold your relationship together for the long term — but a combination of them is *absolutely non-negotiable*.

Without *intimacy* in your relationship, you effectively become roommates, passing in the halls, maybe sharing the occasional meal together, and then sitting down and browsing the “Trending” section of Netflix while you both scroll on your phones.

Now, imagine doing that *for the rest of your life*.

Wouldn't exactly call it *thriving*, would you?

Intimacy is a fire — and a fire must be stoked over time in order to remain ablaze. If you leave it alone for too long, it will slowly (but surely) extinguish, leaving behind only remnants of what was used to once keep it alive.

If, though, you continue to stoke it — to add fuel — to put new wood on top of the old...it will stay lit forever.

The same goes for intimacy in its requirement of nourishment. It's a flame that must be fanned *by both partners* over time. It's something that we do ourselves a massive disservice by ignoring, or minimizing, or pushing down the list of priorities.

Emotional intimacy is what brings us together. It's what builds a bond, a connection, a sense of trust, respect, and love.

Then, it becomes expressed through physical intimacy, which strengthens our bond and keeps the “spark” alive.

If one side of intimacy fades, it brings the other down with it.

“James, doing this forever sounds like a lot of effort.”

It is, which is exactly why so many relationships end up getting “stale” or completely falling apart as a result.

Sure, intimacy and romance is only one piece of the puzzle, and there are many different reasons why people go their separate ways...

We find it's much like oxygen, though, in that the *less of it you're getting, the bigger of a deal it seems to become*.

6: Willingness to ride the rollercoaster together.

In point #1 I mentioned we'd be discussing navigating the "problems" or disagreements together, which is exactly what thriving and healthy couples pledge to do.

They pledge to work through their challenges together.

This requires intentional and conscious processing of emotions when they're running high. To promise *not to use insults, or weaponize insecurities, or drag up the past* when in the middle of a disagreement, but instead, to remain focused on the issue at hand.

It requires making the promise that when a problem is presented to you, you remember that it's *both of you against the problem, and not both of you against each other*.

This, in itself, can make all of the difference.

7: Forgiveness.

Spoiler alert: Nobody's perfect.

Not me, not you, and not your partner...but you already knew that.

This means that somewhere along the line, mistakes are going to be made.

Now, let's just set one thing straight — you *must always maintain* your standards and boundaries in a relationship. That means NO cheating, NO abuse, NO betrayal, and NO intentional hurting of each other under any circumstances.

I believe that when mistakes are made, *context* is important. What kind of mistake was it? Was it honestly and genuinely an accident, or was there malice behind the intention?

For the sake of this point, let's operate as if someone has made an honest mistake that they are profusely sorry for, and *are doing the necessary work to make up for it*.

This is when forgiveness is important. It may be difficult, it may take time, but if you've pledged to spend the rest of your life with someone, there are going to be moments over the coming decades where you'll need to work harder than others in order to honor that pledge.

If you're having a hard time forgiving, remember that there may come a time when *you* are the one in need of forgiveness, and consider how you'd want your partner to act if (when) that time comes.

8: Personal accountability.

There are two sides to forgiveness.

Yes, the willingness to forgive — but only if the person *being forgiven* is remorseful for what they've done to require said forgiveness.

This means being willing to take responsibility for your actions.

Personal accountability.

Not shifting the blame.

Not pointing fingers.

Not gaslighting.

Not making your partner feel guilty.

Just good old fashioned: “I was wrong, I’m sorry, I’ll do better next time.”

If one (or both) partners in a relationship are incapable of taking responsibility for their own actions, this will eat away at the foundation of your relationship like termites over time. Each avoided apology, each skirted responsibility, each ignored hurtful action they’ve done will eat more and more away at your trust and respect for them, until the entire thing crumbles under the pressure.

9: Full acceptance of each other.

You can’t thrive as a couple if you don’t fully accept the realest, most authentic, unfiltered versions of each other.

The good, the annoying, the frustrating, the nuanced, the insecure, the anxious...

It all comes along with the loving, caring, patient, compassionate, nurturing, and loyal person whom you’ve grown to love over the years.

Fully accepting each other...I mean FULLY accepting, is non-negotiable for couples who hope to thrive together.

Massive amounts of trust are required in order to show your full self to someone, and that trust must be earned (and also maintained) over time. It's something that grows gradually as you show each other that you're serious about this commitment, and that you, also, are willing to open up and bare yourself to them in return.

In these moments, you're given the opportunity to love them *even more* because of what you learn. You *don't* have to like every single little thing about their past, or even about their present — hell, you don't even like every little thing about yourself!

But, you DO have to accept it. You have to embrace it, and make the promise to live with it.

Notice that I'm not using the word "tolerate," as acceptance is much more complete. If you tolerate something or someone, you're just dealing with them for as long as you can handle it, and there's no peace, joy, or love in that.

Accepting someone (as they accept you in return) helps you to understand them, to respect them, to admire them, and to **love** them.

10: The freedom to be YOUR truest self.

The only truly sustainable thing over time is honesty.

Honesty in who you are, what you believe, who you love, and the life that brings you joy and fulfillment.

It really doesn't matter what any of these things are (as long as you're not hurting anyone).

It doesn't matter if your truest self wants to live on a farm, or an island, or in a penthouse in the city.

It doesn't matter if you want to be the CEO of a Fortune 50 company, or a volunteer in a non-profit.

It doesn't matter if you're Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, or an atheist.

All that truly matters at the end of the day — all that will truly allow you to live a life that makes **you** feel connected, fulfilled, and complete...is that you have the freedom and ability to be the person who you really are at your core. To take the mask off. To drop the act.

To just...be.

And, when you find the right person, that's exactly what they'll give you

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They'll find beauty in the things that make you feel insecure.

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And, when you can **both** show up with that level of authenticity every single day knowing that, not only are you *not judged* for it, but actually *loved and valued because of it...*

That's when you'll realize why it never worked out with anyone else.

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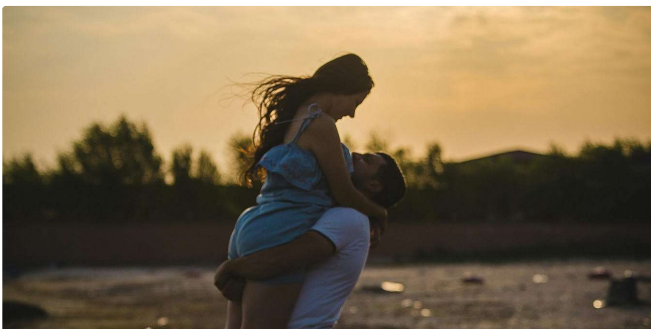


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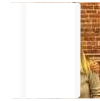
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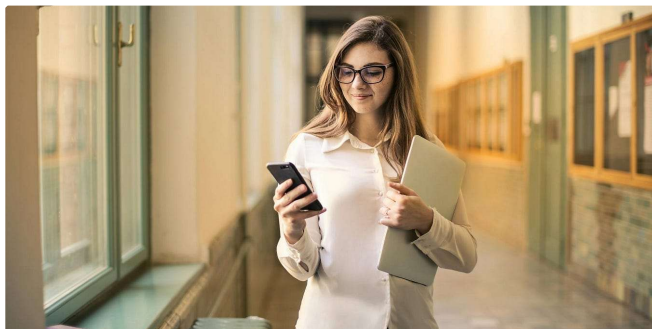
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