



When is it the Right Time?

We'll meet him in some sort of unexplained, interesting way when we least expect it or crave it. He'll be tall and handsome, charming and funny, successful and kind-hearted. He'll approach us willingly and pursue us adamantly, because he'll know even before we know that we were designed by the universe to be together.

He'll be our Mr. Right – and one day, our paths will cross. Perhaps they already have. Maybe you can't believe you've found him and you're even more surprised he actually exists. After all of those dating battles, woes and worries; that broken heart that swore it would never mend, is now preparing for happily ever after.

While you were putting yourself out there, keeping your man-antenna sturdy and stable, signing up for Match.com and sitting through yet another boring date with an eligible bachelor, that's probably still eligible. You did more than just wine-and-dine; you also climbed up the ladder in your career and developed a network of contacts and friendships, making your life and bank account full and rich. You traveled and learned new languages, while creating friendships that fulfill your heart and martini glass.

So, despite all these years dreaming if he'd ever come around, the question isn't if you'll find Mr. Right – it's more like: is this the right time to get married? The fear isn't about being alone forever, but of giving up that beautiful career that brings you happiness to waltz toward happily ever after. It's the question we all wonder – can we really have a healthy marriage and career?

Savoring Freedom

Before becoming engaged to her husband, Joy Schoffler, from Austin, Texas, took a trip to Thailand for seven weeks. While she felt she had established her career, and had a lot of the life experiences she wanted before entering into her marriage, she wanted to test the waters on her own before accepting a proposal. "Knowing that I could be completely independent, and have the freedom to do as I chose, gave me confidence to make a commitment," she said.

She also wanted to have every aspect of her personal life properly managed before she became someone's partner. During her last year in college, Joy acquired significant debt and wanted to pay off all of her credit cards before getting married. "I firmly believe that finances are one of the most sensitive areas of marriage and can cause resentment," she said. "I wanted to make sure my marriage had the greatest possibility of success by being debt free."

Even now, post-marriage and children, asserting your individual identity plays a part in being content too. For example, says Joy, "I maintain my independence and sense of self by having happy hours with girlfriends and little things like pedicures and massages." And to keep their marriage loving and romantic, Joy and her husband never go without date nights or spending time together without the kids when they can.





Communication is Key

Founder and chief leader at SheLeads, Dr. Christina Schlachter, thought Joy's decision to savor her freedom and make sure her life was in order before getting married was a great one. While Schlachter doesn't believe there is necessarily a "right" time to get married, there are right reasons for marrying the right person. But, before any of those reasons or any soulmate can matter, it's important to really know yourself, she says. "If you are trying to discover who you are, needing to explore the world or starting a new career, you need to seriously think if you can handle one more significant change," she warned. "This does not mean you will not marry the person you want to, it simply means you may want to wait until you're satisfied in your single life before you commit to loving another person with every inch of your being."

Before deciding if it's the right time to get married, experts like Schlachter and Jessica LeRoy, the founder and clinical director for the Center for the Psychology of Women, suggest that you and your fiancé ask each other the following six questions:

- 1. Expectations.** Do you and your partner have the same outlook on what marriage means and what it entails?
- 2. Outlook.** Do you and your partner share the same life vision, like work schedules, time off, vacations, children, and friendships?
- 3. Compromise.** Are you ready to give up certain aspects of your single life, such as not having sex with other people, merging finances, having to check in with someone, and an overall shrinkage of independence and personal freedom?
- 4. Commitment.** Can you imagine yourself sitting on a porch with this person in a nursing home or changing his/her clothes if he/she can not do it for themselves?
- 5. Friendships.** Do your friends get along and do they like your fiancé?
- 6. Sacrifice.** If you had to give up your favorite activity for this person, are you willing to do it?

If you can honestly answer "yes" to all of these questions, you may have found the right person and you may be feeling the marrying-bug for the right reasons. But, once you say "I do", how can you make sure to maintain that "I can do it" mantra you've lived by?

Priorities, Priorities

Your fiancé loves that you not only know how to change the oil in your car, but you insist on mowing the lawn and being your own handy-woman. It's your self-sufficiency that attracted him, but marriage needs compromise and the ability to lean on one another to be healthy. So how do you balance what makes you you and what makes your marriage work?

Schlachter says it's less about balance and more about negotiating. "You need to be honest with yourself about what you are willing to give and willing to take," she says. "Work/life is not an illusion, but it is misrepresented. You cannot have it all – all the time. There is a wheel of life that balances work/career with life/fun/relationships and sometimes, you give 100 percent to your career and sometimes 100 percent to your family, but you can only give 100 percent, so something has to bend."

Once she got married, Joy said she changed her career-centric view on life, became less cynical, and more accommodating, but she didn't give up the profession she loved. "As a former Army officer and workaholic, I was afraid I would lose my independence, my ability to travel, and my career would have to take a backseat," Joy expressed. "I was so scared that I told my husband I would only accept his proposal on the condition I got to travel by myself at least once every other year." After two children that promise has been hard to upkeep, but Joy just spent a week alone in Europe visiting a friend.

Since being a Mrs. and a mother, Joy has not given up her career, but she's shifted it: "I searched far and wide to find a field I had passion for and that also allowed for flexibility to work part-time or contract out work. Enabling that flexibility to be with my kids when they needed me, but also bring in money," she said.

Negotiating the Fit

By negotiating your needs and making terms for your marriage, before you cascade down the aisle toward your joint futures, you should prepare your relationship for complications that may arrive. If you're open and honest with yourself about what you need, what you're willing to give up, and what you expect out of your marriage, then both you and your spouse will be fulfilled and happy with the union.

Maybe you have a few weeks left until the big day, maybe you have months or maybe you're just satisfied knowing you found the right person – regardless, before accepting the proposal or planning your nuptials, make a plan for yourself. Make a list of parts of your life



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you're not willing to compromise, what you would change, and what you expect out of a lifelong partner. Be open and honest with your guy and have him make the same lists.

Sparks may have flown when you met, chemistry and passion may have kept you smitten, and love may be what you foresee forever, but without communication and the ability to give and take, compromise and negotiate, it'll never be the right time. Before there's a Mr. Right or a right time, you have to figure out what type of marriage is right for you.

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