Is Marriage Good For You?

It took a Benedictine monk to bring ‘consent’ into marriage. There was a time when marriage was used to establish relationships that had nothing to do with love or romance. The consent of the parties was not even important. Marriage was strategic; it brought peace between warring factions, it helped to establish diplomatic ties between nations and if it facilitated trade and economics it was a bonus. The wishes of the married couple were of little importance. This changed in the year 1140.

The monk Gratian argued that consent between the couple ‘mattered more than their families approved.’ In his canon law Decretum Gratiani he argued that, ‘couples had to give their consent and consummate the marriage to forge a marital bond. No longer was a bride or groom’s presence at a ceremony enough to signify their assent.’

By 1563 marriage became one of the seven sacraments and in 1670 it took an Act of Parliament to allow Lord Roos to divorce his wife Lady Anne Pierpon. It was only in 1858 that divorce could take place legally and it took another hundred years for couples to cite marital breakdown as a cause for divorce.

Arranged marriages were common in other cultures and divorce was prohibited. This was prevalent in Hindu weddings. In fact it was the usual practice for the bride and groom to see each other for the first time on the night of the wedding. This practice has changed over time and today ‘love marriages’ are the norm. Given the varying practices, the ceremonies and the cost is marriage good for you?

Many studies report that marriage is good for one’s health. A US study has shown that married couples, ‘have a lower risk of heart attacks, strokes, cancer and even pneumonia.’ The conclusion is that if you want to live a long and healthy life marriage is good for you. Doctors at Harvard University found that patients who were married stability that marriage provides may prevent couples from indulging in risky behaviors. Some of these behaviors may involve alcohol use, drugs, smoking or even driving recklessly. The argument is that once you have something to live for you are likely to take precautions.

Married couples usually act as a source of encouragement for both. For example, they may remind each other about doctor’s appointments and may drive each other to the doctor’s office. Married couples are known to go jogging together and to follow an exercise regimen that can improve their physical and emotional health.

One cannot rule out the advantage that marriage provides to reduce stress. Working at the office or in a high stress environment can lead to the person being edgy and bad-tempered. By having someone to talk to about the day’s work can release stress and lead to balance in the relationship. If a spouse is a good listener the relationship has the potential to be on a strong footing.

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Faith in a relationship cannot be over-emphasized. The lack of faith and trust is the stuff of talk shows; infidelity is big business and even in reality it is sacred. It should be shared with one partner only and it should be guarded in the face of temptations.

Who is really perfect in a relationship? Who is right all the time? Trying to show superiority or that you are the boss in the relationship will create tension and eliminate the ‘give and take’ that is healthy. It will also mean that one person makes all the decisions and spend time justifying mistakes. It is better if the decision is collective and well thought out. In this way ownership belongs to the couple rather than one person.

Consultation becomes even more important when children enter the marriage. Their needs may have to take precedence at times and a marriage should be able to accommodate and to promote and nurture the strength of the commitment. Feelings come and go but commitment lasts forever.

A good marriage is usually busy and seldom lonely. It produces a sense of comfort and security and you know that growing old together wouldn’t be a daunting prospect after all. Despite being grey and wrinkled there is someone who will be there to have and to hold and if you are lucky the grandchildren will be around to add cheer and joy.

One of the benefits of marriage is the network of possibilities that it brings. There is the saying that marriage joins two people but in reality it also widens the scope of relationships by bringing families together. Marriage is then a social good. According to sociologists, ‘regardless of our modern looking at the social good of marriage, what happens in your home does not stay in your home. It has significant implications on your family, community and your work.’

Marriage has often been criticized as being outdated and irrelevant. But the benefits are clear. People that are married live longer, and have healthier lives. The statistics show that in nine out of ten marriages people who are alive at 48 will make it to 70 compared with just 6 in 10 single guys.’ The benefits are also powerful for women as 90 per cent of wives at age 48 will live to be se-nior citizens.

While marriages tend to bring a heap of rewards for both parties men tend to do extremely well. In 2006 a University of California research showed that ‘happily married men tend to outlast their single counterparts. Single people are five times more likely to die of infectious diseases and nearly 40 percent are more likely to die from heart disease.’ The mortality rate of single men is 250 per cent times higher than it is among married men.

How does one stay happily married? Love can bring two people together but it may not necessarily keep them together. Marriage is hard work. One way to stay happily married is to pack a lot of thoughtfulness in the relationship. It does not have to be the expensive gift or holiday. Start with the little things such as making that cup of tea for your partner, help with the household chores, including the cooking and allocate some private time for each other.

Happily married couples know when to say they are sorry. A good movie or a meal may bring couples together but knowing when to spring a surprise will help to keep the relationship going. It is said that happily married couples spend 25 per cent more likely to apologize first. One survey found that, ‘the harder divorced and single people find it to apologize or make conciliatory gestures, the more likely they are to stay single.’

Marriage is wonderful, so do the right thing. Make that proposal and take the plunge!