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Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.

The Love Culture¹

Suzanna Smith²

The recent marriage of an award-winning actress and famous country singer happened quickly...and lasted about four months. This whirlwind romance was followed by another marriage casualty.

Choosing the right partner is an important decision, maybe even the most important one you will make. Bad relationships can affect your job performance, health, financial security, and even how long you live. However, the U.S. has what researchers refer to as a "love culture," where passion often beats out rational decision-making in choosing a lifelong partner (Schwartz, 2003).

What does it take to make love work, even when the initial chemistry fades? Based on data collected from over 21,000 couples around the country, researchers compared happy and unhappy couples and found distinct differences on several factors (Schwartz, 2003).

Over 75% of happy couples said that their partners were good listeners and understood how they feel, compared to less than 20% of unhappy couples. They felt that they could share feelings and ideas, even during disagreements (Schwartz, 2003).

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The vast majority of happy couples also spent leisure time together and found it easy to think of things to do. Even in the midst of busy work and family schedules, happy couples planned time for their partner. Happy couples had a satisfying sex life, too, so while passion may not be the most important thing in making a marriage last, it is one vital piece of many factors that make up a healthy and happy relationship (Schwartz, 2003).

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