

# WHAT ARE YOUR NON- NEGOTIABLES?

Now that you've thought about the difference in mistakes and patterns of behavior, you might want to update your list of 5 qualities that you're looking for in a partner.

That list might not give you the whole picture because you're learning more about the type of person you want in your life. You would hope that your "must-haves" would exclude things you don't want.

Non-negotiables are qualities you absolutely must have or must not have in your relationship. Let's examine this in more detail.

# FEAR OF APPEARING SHALLOW

Some people are afraid of putting “handsome” or “beautiful” on their list. **If having a great looking partner is important to you, put it on your list.**

- If you think you’ll have regrets if someone, no matter how wonderful they are in other areas, doesn’t look the way you want, put it on your list.
- This is your list, your relationship, and your life.

**The same is true about wanting children.** If you don’t want children, don’t let comments of friends, family, or rude people you don’t know put a guilt trip on you.

**At the same time, know things can change.**

For example, the drummer of a well-known heavy metal band had never planned on getting married. He didn’t think it was possible for a woman to put up with his travel schedule. He was also terrified of having children.

In his 40s all that changed. He now has a wife, a daughter he adores, and is a loving stepfather to three other kids. This was totally unexpected for him. He is

happier than he ever thought possible with a woman who is fine with his travel schedule and kids he loves and who love him.

## **WILL NON-NEGOTIABLES BEFORE MARRIAGE REMAIN AFTER MARRIAGE?**

This is a question you won't know the answer to until it happens. What happens when someone you've been with develops one of your non-negotiables?

Let's say on your list is someone who doesn't drink. You're sure they won't drink because they grew up in a home where alcohol had destroyed the family. And they haven't had anything to drink for 10 years.

**The unexpected happens.** It could be a job loss, illness, or death of a loved one. They begin to drink or use drugs "just a little to take the edge off" to cope with the situation. You become aware that the alcohol or drugs are causing problems in your family. What was beautiful has become difficult.

# HOW TO AVOID A FUTURE NON-NEGOTIABLE

## YOU CAN'T COMPLETELY ELIMINATE A FUTURE NON-NEGOTIABLE, BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN BE AWARE OF WHILE YOU'RE DATING:

1. **Fidelity.** Avoid thinking that someone who is married or in another relationship will be faithful to you. Remember the words of Oscar Wilde, "When a man marries his mistress, there is a vacancy in that position."
2. **Notice the way they treat others.** If you want a kind and supportive partner, avoid staying in a relationship with someone who treats his parents badly.
  - **How someone treats their family is indicative of how they will treat you.**
  - Just because they are separated from

their family doesn't mean they won't treat you well. Some families are toxic and need to be far away.

3. **Avoid making excuses for bad behavior.** If you find yourself continually needing to apologize for your partner, know that there is a problem. It will continue unless your partner changes their behavior.
4. **These behaviors are true for you, also.**
  - If you want someone with integrity, don't lie.
  - If you want someone supportive, be supportive.
  - **Walk your talk.**
5. **Like yourself.** You deserve to be treated well by others and by yourself.

**Look for the qualities you want in a partner.** Also, be aware of the actions which are contrary to those qualities. No one can be perfect. Look at the whole of their behavior and evaluate it according to the qualities you most want.

# CHECKING YOUR LIST TWICE

Double check your must-have list to ensure everything you must have is on it. You can also add more if you need to. **Revise your list as you learn what is most important to you.**

# SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

As you continue to date and have relationships, you may discover other must-have qualities for your partner. Add them. You may also discover some which aren't really must-haves. Revising your list is a sign of maturity and growth.

Also, be aware of your non-negotiables. Those are the things you must have or must not have.

Now that you have your list, know that your partner will still let you down at least once... or twice. How will you handle that? That's the next lesson.

# HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TODAY

## REFLECTION

1. Take your list of the qualities you want and rate how well you adhere to them on a scale of 1 - 5, with 1 being not at all and 5 being all the time.
2. Of your qualities, which are non-negotiable? Why or why not?