

Marriage: A Sustainable and Voluntary Romantic Association



Send him mail.

"Insight for the Young and Unrestrained" is an original weekly column appearing every Thursday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Gregory V. Diehl. Gregory is a writer, musician, educator, and coach for young people at EnabledYouth.com. Archived columns can be found here. IYU-only RSS feed available here.

All romantic relationships begin voluntarily. We meet people and spend greater amounts of time with them as we realize that we enjoy doing so. I've observed in young people, and especially so in older people, that they often do not remain this way in the long haul. Individuals become emotionally attached and comfortable with their partners and are often unable to dissolve their partnerships even when they become detrimental to their overall happiness and well-being.

The relationship problem is further compounded by getting married and all its contractual complications with the state, the struggle to fit into some ill-defined mold of cultural normalness, and of course, the raising of children sprung from a romantic pairing. I would boldly venture to guess that the majority of Americans currently married today no longer really want to be married, but instead unhappily continue to be so out of an unhappy sense of obligation or the fear of changing what has become familiar. National divorce statistics corroborate this point.

Marriage means many things to many people. I don't mean to disrespect anyone's conception of relationships or personal lifestyle preferences, but I'd like to share some thoughts I have on what a logical approach to marriage and romantic relationships might look like.

When I think of marriage, I envision the mutual intention of a lifelong pairing (often with the explicit intention of having children and raising them together). For my purposes, I grant no credence or importance to social rituals, religious values, or legal contractual obligations which typically accommodate a modern American marriage. Marriage is a commitment to the other person constituting a shared identity, a pair-bond, and a reciprocally beneficial partnership.

If a lifelong romantic partnership is the goal, it is wise to learn from the mistakes of others. It is likewise wise to learn everything one can from every relationship and romantic encounter they have in order to make the next all the more closer to how they want it to be. The emergence of early warning signs should serve to save potential years wasted in fundamentally futile relationships.

An optimal marriage, to me, comes down to sustainability. Emotions are cyclical and ever-changing, as we know, but the fundamental attraction factors upon which a relationship is based do not have to be. If our love is based upon physical attraction, that love may fade as looks fade. If it is based upon a common interest in pop culture or hobbies, what can be said about such a union when it is not engrossed in such trivia? If based upon any of the other arbitrarily shifting factors of a person, little hope exists for its long-term prognosis.

A love built upon natural principles and dynamics does not fade because natural principles do not fade (that's what makes them principles). I believe that a person who knows themselves also knows what drives them and where their natural temperament resides. I believe if you can identify in yourself what your true temperament is beneath what you have been told to care about and how to act by society for the duration of your life, you have the grounds for a sustainable romantic partnership.

When you understand your temperament, you understand the filter through which you interpret and process reality. Filters for reality determine our values and priorities and the other things we care about, which ultimately far downstream show themselves most visibly as surface level personality traits like a preference for romantic comedies instead of action movies. The important distinction lies in whether the attraction was formed based on one's appreciation for superheroes, or the temperament and core values which lead to that appreciation.

When you find someone whom you would voluntarily choose to see and be with each and every day of your own volitional accord independently of convention or obligation, you've found a temperament complimentary to your own and you have the seeds to germinate an indefinitely sustainable relationship. This is because the complementary partner for you will ultimately only help you grow deeper into what you already fundamentally are, not change you into someone else. Your temperament, the way you process sensory input and information, forms the fundamental you.

Forcing a fundamentally incompatible set of temperaments to function romantically after the novelty of their influence upon each other has faded will only lead to grief and strife for both parties. Woe and sympathy especially to the offspring born unto a mismatched unsustainable marriage whom will likely never receive the healthy examples of masculine and feminine strength and interaction they need. Experiencing the unavoidable dissolution of a pair-bond, often called "heartbreak", is touted as one of the deepest pains both men

and women can experience. It is also one of the greatest possible learning experiences.

Making the choice to spend your life with someone requires planning, perspective, foresight, and maturity of a caliber trumped only by parenthood. No one can tell you who the right person is for you, but we can all be sure that you will only have the capacity to recognize them when you first know yourself, and most likely after many failed attempts at relationships previously.

I want to further note that none of this need negate any of the passion, lust, excitement, and joy that come with romance. When the right partner is found, these things spring forth intrinsically as a welcome consequence to each other's company. It is in seeking only these downstream effects of love and complimentary pairing that we condemn ourselves to disappointment later on. If we seek compatibility at the source though, everything else falls into place and a sustainable harmony can be created for a lifetime of romance, built upon a mutual desire to be in each other's company, which requires no psychological force or obligation and sets the stage for an optimal environment for the rearing of children.