

# Relationship Reality Check

## 10 Questions that Can Transform Your Love Life

By Dr. Jacqueline Del Rosario

Relationships often collapse because couples are not prepared to withstand the inevitable conflicts or even the humdrum and monotonous plateau period that's nearly certain to present as the years go by. A relationship can feel more like "boot camp" when trying to acclimate to each other's personality differences and habits—frustrations, tensions, and resentments that can persist well into a long-term love affair and undermine the ability to feel happy and content. For other couples, it's sheer boredom that can wreak havoc—if the partnership doesn't continue to stimulate and enrich their lives, the doldrums can be a relationship death knell!

Below Dr. Jacqueline Del Rosario, "America's Relationship Doctor," has identified 10 self-assessment questions—answers to which can not only help a relationship survive, but also thrive so that both partners can actualize their dreams of "happily ever after":

**Am I putting my best face forward?** People dress up in their best clothes, make sure their hair is done, and put on makeup for the outside world. Do you put forth the same effort to impress and excite your mate?

**Am I still growing?** You must come to a relationship, willing to continuously improve who you are so that your relationship can continue to evolve. Consider trying new things together. Exploration and adventure can go a long way to keeping things fresh and appealing and will help you understand and appreciate who your partner is today. Continue to date and experience new things as a couple.

**Am I continuing to invest the time and effort to maintain a strong foundation?** All good things take work, and both parties must roll up their sleeves and commit to doing their part to add value to the union. This includes continually stoking the

flames of passion. Are you as proactive or even adventuresome in the bedroom, or are you relegated to business as usual? Break the routine here and watch the magic ensue.

**What are the anchors in my relationship?** What are the things that keep you rooted and well-connected with your partner? Why are you together in the first place? Identifying and nurturing similar values, goals, and expectancies in your relationship are fundamental and will help you endure during the tough times.

**How can I help improve our communication style?** It is essential to learn how each party in the partnership prefers to communicate. You must then make the conscious effort to deliver and receive messages from your mate according to their personal style, which may differ from yours. Knowing when and how to disseminate information is a key relationship skill that can be a saving grace unto itself. And, during an argument, always fight fair and with respect—no name calling, no degrading one another, and no using your tongue as a weapon of mass destruction.

**What unmet expectations do we each have that need to be addressed?** Unfortunately, unmet expectations are often not shared and, instead, they can fester within and result in resentment and bitterness. How can you expect your mate to meet your expectations if you don't voice them? It's unfair of you to feel that your partner "should know" or be able to decipher passive aggressive cues that something is wrong. Met expectations equal relational bliss, so be honest with what you need from your partner for a real chance that those needs will be met, or even exceeded.

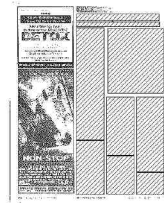
**What emotional triggers might be adversely affecting my current relationship?** Triggers link back to past traumas and can hinder the way we respond to or even perceive present

day issues. Were you lied to or cheated on in the past? It doesn't mean you cannot trust your current mate. Did your past partner drink too much? It doesn't mean this partner can't enjoy a cocktail responsibly. Put your old baggage aside and experience your current partner on their own merits and actions.

**Do I stop, look, and listen?** Take the time to listen to and validate your mate. Couples often decrease their talk time once they have been together awhile and feel comfortable. Keep the channels of communication open—chatter about the day's events, current events, family matters and similar. It bonds the heart and abates the feeling of growing apart. Should a concern be expressed along the way, it's imperative to hear your mate and try to empathize with how they feel.

**Do I allow outside interference?** There is a reason "interference" is a penalty in most sports. It is because someone is getting involved where and when they do not have a right. This can result in focusing on the wrong issues and reinforcing dangerous and emotional conclusions that can be detrimental to your relationship. Your partner may also be very angry to find out that others are now involved in your private life. Instead, go directly to your partner to resolve relationship problems. However, if things are critical and seemingly out of both of your control, qualified assistance can come from marriage coaches and counselors who are there to help get the dialogue between the two of you on the right track.

**Do I have a maintenance plan?** Are you still doing what you did to get your mate? Do you know exactly why your mate should or would want to stay with you in the months and years ahead? What emotional benefits do you offer your mate that others don't? Take the time to assess what your virtues are and even ask your mate to cite favorite qualities about



you. Then, make a concerted effort to foster these qualities to not only ensure interest remains, but also maximize the caliber of that interest. **WI**

*"America's Marriage Coach" Jacqueline Del Rosario is President and CEO of Recapturing the Vision International, an organization dedicated to promoting healthy marriages and family strengthening.*



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