Dear Alice,

I was wondering whether compatibility and dependability are more important than passion and fun, in terms of relationships.

?Learning

Answer

Dear Learning,

It depends on who you are and what you're looking for. For a relationship to work over time, it takes more than just finding the right person; it's also a matter of being the right person. And while relationships have a lot to do with the connection between two people, it takes work from both parties to strengthen this connection and keep it alive.

As far as what's more important, compatibility or fun, both elements are necessary for a healthy, fulfilling relationship, and their level of importance varies with different types and stages of relationships. Compatibility can encompass a variety of things including similar interests and phases in life, whether or not both people want the same level of commitment in the relationship, and most importantly, whether there is a willingness to accept each other's differences and pursue the relationship anyway. Fun and passion are often more prominent in (though certainly not exclusive to) the earlier stages of getting to know someone, and compatibility and dependability often become increasingly important as the relationship becomes more serious. There is no set pattern that determines the types of relationships people choose throughout their lifetime. For example, a young adult may want the fun and excitement of dating without the responsibility that comes with a long-term relationship, and an older individual may seek companionship and someone with whom they can settle down, or the situations can be reversed. Types of relationships and the reasons individuals choose them are as varied as the individuals themselves. But a lasting relationship requires a balance of fun, dependability, passion, and compatibility, among a number of other factors. What gets thrown into the mix that makes up a relationship depends on the people involved, their values, and their choices.

So a big question to consider is, what can you offer right now to a potential partner? Do you have the time and desire to devote yourself to a long-term relationship, or are you looking for something with a lower level of commitment? Whether you want lasting love or just casual dating, you also need to consider where you are in life and what expectations you have of the
people you become involved with. When you get to the point of meeting someone you think you might like, take it slowly and learn about her or him first – her/his interests, family, values, culture, tastes, quirks, etc. – as s/he also gets to know you better. Even more important, be honest about what you are looking for in a relationship, and be willing to work if you desire to develop and have a healthy, satisfying relationship with someone you care about.

Alice!

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Relationships [2]
Relationship Stuff [3]
Finding a Partner [4]

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