

REMARRIAGE AT MIDLIFE

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You might assume that remarriage at midlife would be easier, less complicated and more predictable given our more extensive life experience. The fact is that it is much more difficult than anyone ever anticipates due to circumstances within as well as outside the relationship. Statistically we know that second and third marriages have a higher incidence of divorce than first marriages. Generally this is because most people make the same mistakes in choosing a significant other as well as failing to learn how they (themselves) contributed to the demise of the previous relationship. Similarly after a divorce, many people spend an enormous amount of energy “demonizing” their “ex” rather than honestly evaluating their own part in the break up.

The first thing to do to prepare for remarriage is to recognize how to be a better partner this time around. *What specific things do I do that makes living with me challenging?* Take a long, hard honest look at yourself. Ask your friends and family to be patently frank with you. Get some counseling and determine what your true part in the demise of your previous relationships was.

The next concern is taking time to really get to know each other. Many older couples rush into the relationship because they feel they have finally found “the one” and they are in the latter half of their life. Give it at least a year, preferably two so friends, family members and your older children get to know your new love. Ask them for their honest opinions and particularly any concerns they have. No one likes to hear after a relationship fails, “I knew he wasn’t right for you!” Do not dismiss their observations because you want this to work out so desperately. Why risk spending any more of your life in yet another unhappy relationship? Give the relationship time so each of you can see each other at your worse. This is the test of whether you want to spend your life with someone. At midlife, it is easier to hide one’s “dark side”... so beware!

Lastly, do not relax your standards. At midlife, many people “settle” fearing, “This may be my last chance.” Take the time to list out the qualities and characteristics you must have in a permanent relationship and those you cannot accept. Remember that “*chains break at their weakest links, not at their strongest ones*”. Don’t compromise because you have been disarmed by his or her better qualities. Life experiences should equip us with the intuition to make sound decisions, not wear us down so we don’t use wise judgment.

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