

Thinking of proposing this Valentine's Day? Relate Cambridge and Marriage Care release advice on how to know if the time is right

According to research, Valentine's Day is one of the most popular times of the year to propose. 2016 is also a leap year, so we can expect to see even more proposals on 29th February.

Commitment means different things to different people. A recent survey by Relate, Marriage Care and Relationships Scotland found that sharing problems, exclusivity and marriage were the top three signs of commitment in a relationship, with sharing problems coming out top across all age groups.

But if you are considering proposing to your partner either this February or any time in the near future, how can you be certain that they are the right person for you? Relate Cambridge and Marriage Care have put together some tips to help you decide whether you're ready to take your relationship to the next level.

Relate counsellor Elaine Taylor at Relate Cambridge said: "Getting married is wonderful and exciting but for some people, making the actual decision to propose can cause a lot of stress and anxiety. One of the problems is the huge emphasis we place on finding 'the one'. If there's supposedly only one person for us, we sometimes worry that the odds are stacked against us and we probably haven't found them.

"If you're having doubts, it may help to focus less on the idea of that perfect person and ask yourself how your partner makes you feel. If they make you happy and support you then the chances are they are probably the right person for you. If not, then think twice about proposing or you may regret it later down the line."

Things to consider before popping the question

Ask yourself why you want this: Do you want to get married because you want to spend the rest of your lives together or are there other motivations like the fact that all your friends are getting married?

Remember 'the one' is a myth: It can be tempting to think there's someone out there who is perfect for us – who can fulfill our every need and complete us. But the truth is, that perfect person doesn't exist – you need to work at relationships.

Ask whether you can be yourself around them: It's important to be able to relax around the person you are marrying. You shouldn't feel like you have to be someone else or hide parts of your personality.

Think about your values: Do you have the same values and a similar outlook on life? We're not talking about taste in music or films, but the ideas and principles that really matter to you.

Ask if they show you love and support: You need to know the person you are marrying cares about you and will be there for you when you need them most. People show their love and support different ways so think beyond whether they give enough kisses and cuddles.

Understand that some doubts are normal: There are no guarantees in relationships – and *some* degree of doubt is inevitable. If you are having strong doubts, be sure to listen to them but remember they can come from all sorts of places, including childhood. It might be a good idea to speak to your partner and/or a relationship counsellor.

Listen to your partner: Have you talked about your future together? Has your partner mentioned that they would like to get married? It's best to have had these kinds of chats before you propose. You could even ditch the proposal altogether and make a joint decision to get married!

Take into account the time you have been together: The beginning of a relationship is often full of lust and intensity. It can be tempting to get caught up in this and rush into things but marriage is a big commitment and it's better to wait until you really know the person.

Don't feel like you have to get married: Not everyone wants to get married. Whether you cohabit, date but live apart, enter into a civil partnership or a marriage, the most important thing is the quality of your relationship.

Relate Cambridge offers information, advice and counselling for all stages of your relationships. Call us on 01302 347712 or visit www.relatecambridge.org.uk for more information.

Marriage Care offers relationship education courses for couples who want to strengthen their relationships and counselling for those who need some support. Call us on 0800 389 3801 for a local appointment or visit www.marriagecare.org.uk for more information.

*All figures are taken from [The Way We Are Now 2015](#) – an annual study of the relationships of over 6000 people across the UK by Relate, Relationships Scotland and Marriage Care. The study was carried out by YouGov. Responses were gathered between 27th March and 7th April 2015. All figures are based on Relate analysis of data provided by YouGov Plc.

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Relate Cambridge – supporting relationships at every stage of your life

Notes to editors:

- Relate Cambridge delivered nearly 6,000 sessions last year.
- The following are links to two promotional films made by Relate Cambridge: <http://vimeo.com/92023037> and <http://bit.ly/1NZp4PV>.
- Relate Cambridge celebrated its 70th birthday in 2015.
- Relate and Marriage Care are working together to let people know how relationship support can help people of all ages, at all stages of their relationships.
- Relationships are under increasing pressure – breakdown costs the UK an estimated £46bn each year.
- Relate champions the importance of strong and healthy relationships as the basis of a thriving society.

- Relate provides impartial and non-judgmental support for people of all ages, at all stages of couple, family and social relationships. For more information and advice visit www.relate.org.uk.
- Over a million people every year access information, support and counselling from Relate but its clear many more would benefit from Relate services.
- Relate's couple counselling work delivers an estimated £11.40 of benefits for every £1 spent.
- Relate's services extend beyond relationship counselling to family counselling, counselling for young people, sex therapy and informal courses and workshops and are offered through a network of around 1,700 counsellors across the country.
- Marriage Care is the largest single provider of marriage preparation services, and the second-largest provider, after Relate, of relationship counselling services in England and Wales with over 100 counselling locations, 52 centres and nearly 700 trained volunteers nationwide.
- Government research found that Marriage Care's marriage preparation work delivers an estimated £11.50 of benefit for every £1 spent.
- For more information and support go to www.marriagecare.org.uk or phone 0800 389 3801 for a local appointment.
- Marriage Care is a national charity which helps couples and individuals build and sustain strong, fulfilling healthy relationships through relationship education initiatives, marriage preparation services and relationship counselling to all, regardless of ability to pay.