

: Dr. Miller

active duty and where that would lead nobody knew and we decided at that time that we would get married.

And she joined me sometime later in Fort Knox, and we had a child, and then I went to Korea for a year. And then she had to stay here, so then we kind of repeated what we did when we were in different colleges: we wrote letters almost every day just as we had done in college. When there were no such things as cell phones, there was a pay phone in the dorm lobby which everybody wanted and nobody could use for long. It was easier and better to write letters. She had majored in French, I think, to rebel against her very medical family and went into schoolteaching and taught only one French class for one year out of 30 years, and taught English the rest of the 30 years. She was a very good teacher.

How did you propose?

It was kind of mutual: "well why don't we... well we could... let's!" and we came to "let's" about the same time.

How do you know it's the right person?

I think if you don't know, then it might not be.

A young woman called me ten years ago, she was a former student. She had a couple of guys who were interested in marrying her and asked what she should do. Well, answering that question is a fool's game. I asked what about this guy, what about that one. Then I told her: the very fact that you're asking this question suggests to me that you aren't sure of the answer, and if you aren't sure, then you probably shouldn't. I think this confirmed what she felt and she ended up not marrying either of them.

Shakespeare Sonnet 116 says, "Love is not love, Which alters when it alteration finds, Or bends with the remover to remove: O no! it is an ever-fixed mark." This makes love a forever kind of thing and when we're 22 or 30, we don't know anything about being 50 or 60. I don't know how I'm going to be like and I don't know how you're going to be like 50 and 60, so whatever comes, you have to work through it and with it. And in many ways, my wife has betrayed me horribly—when we married, she had very dark hair, now she has white hair! Sometimes, the changes are inevitable, sometimes people change, they can be nicer or meaner—we don't know how the changes are going to be and how they're going to play out, so you've got to be willing to confront these things and deal with them.

You never know your lovers. Shakespeare says that we can tell how tall they are and what they look like, but one never knows the other person completely. Indeed, that person doesn't know himself or herself completely just as we don't fully know ourselves. This means we are constantly surprised, appreciative, and horrified by our partners and have to deal with these feelings.

What about changing yourself for the person you love? Is it a good thing or should you never change yourself for somebody else?

You know, it always worried me! Ann Landers, who wrote the Lonely Hearts column, would get this letter a lot, "I've dated my boyfriend for four years, and he owes me a lot of money and he beats me, but I think if we got married, I could really change him" and Ann Landers always said: if you want to change your lover, you don't really like your lover—you want to kill your lover and reconstruct him in your own image. So, you have to be very careful when you talk about changing your lover.

You can change yourself, you have autonomy over that, and sometimes when you change yourself, it affects your lover, you know: "I liked you the way you were!" That's the problem with any relationship, there are changes in life, and people change, and if the relationship is going to work, the nature of the loving has to grow and change with the changes of the lovers.

What about listing out characteristics and criteria you want that significant other to have? Is it good to have an idea of what you're looking for or is that making you too inflexible?

I was just very interested in finding a girl who would go out with me! Specific criteria beyond that was always negotiable! If I called her up Friday night and she said she would go, she was the right

one for Friday night! I never had much confidence that I was in the choosing game, I just hoped somebody would choose me. I was always very grateful.

I remember a young woman who went to school here. She was very pretty, and the guys on campus loved her, and to this day, I've had her schoolmates with their wives and two babies in arms come by, and I can almost watch him [the old schoolmate] get a faraway misty look in his eyes and he will ask, "have you heard from ___?" Clearly, she was special to him then and the memory of her remains special. This was because she said yes to any guy who asked her for a date. Even the nerdiest guy on campus would get the next date available, and when they went out she would make him feel like the most special guy in the world! She would give him 100% of her attention for the 30 minutes it might take to get a bagel! She made everybody she was with feel like a million dollars.

I asked her about it once when she was an adult, "You still go out with anybody who asks?" And she said yes. "Why is that?" I said. And she responded, "My mother told me that it was very special to be asked, and I believed that; and I'm very appreciative to all the people who have asked." I've always thought what a wonderful, wonderful person she is who made a lot of young men feel better about themselves.

She could have married hundreds of guys who would have asked her in a heartbeat! Males and females need to keep that in mind: to recognize that other people are special, that your partner whether it be for two dates or one or for a forever relationship needs to be recognized and acknowledged for being special—whatever the person and whatever the relationship is. That's just good manners, and lovers can't forget that. The fact that you've been married for a hundred years does not free you from the obligations from turning around and saying, "You know you look nice tonight, that's pretty, why don't we...?" something like that. You have to recognize that that person shares the universe, the planet with you.

Shouldn't you be selective when it comes to love?

Most of us want to be exclusive and want to make a choice, but the problem is selective for what? Do you have to be selective about your thirty minutes trip to go and get a bagel? It's an honor to be asked, that was her [the former student's] feeling, and she always took it as if it were an honor, she felt privileged to be asked. It's a wonderful way to think. That's why so many people think so fondly and mistily of her.

Any advice on love for the readers?

Remember: I was just thankful that somebody was happy to put up with me! If you are always thankful that somebody's putting up with you, you tend to be respectful of them and thankful for them, which I think helps the relationship. My goodness, she is willing to put up with me, she must be a woman of much charity and kindness. Be honored.

in a growl Never, ever, be maliciously hurtful. I think sometimes we have to be hurtful in relationships, but you never want to be maliciously so. There was a very popular song when I was in school, your age, and the name of the song was, "Love hurts" and it does. If we sit down and think of the folk we know and the number one cause of the worst pain is relationships that have run amuck. You can get over failing an English test, but it's a lot harder to get over being dumped. Sometimes separating is necessary because two people discover that they really don't like each other very much. The fact that we've been going out does not mean that we have to spend rest of life together. When the time comes, you never want to do it maliciously or deliberately hurtfully. Always do it in a way that is as gentle, generous, and kind as possible, realizing nonetheless that you are still doing a hurtful thing. At the same time, you should never feel obligated to sacrifice yourself to your lover.

Any additional comments, Dr. Miller?

Well, I'm just sitting there, thinking this article needs to get burned. I've been making up stuff as I go! It's all a mystery, all a wonder.