

My HeartChart

The Resolute Heart

“Divorce is Not an Option”

What’s a Resolute Heart?

“The most decisive actions of our life -- I mean those that are most likely to decide the whole course of our future -- are, more often than not, unconsidered,” said Andre Gide. He may be right, but not when it comes to you and others with a Resolute Heart. More than most, you’ve carefully considered what you want for your life and one thing is certain: You want to be married. Most likely, you resolved this decision for yourself some time ago. In fact, marriage is such a significant part of your life plan that you may not have even considered the option of not being married.

You’re a true believer when it comes to matrimony. You see marriage as a relationship that is for always and forever. You are more than twice as likely as your peers to say that divorce is not an option for you. When it comes to marriage, you resonate with words like dedication, devotion and commitment. You believe in the institution of marriage and you’re optimistic about being married for life. Resolute Hearts see themselves as having the skills to make a relationship last a lifetime.

More than other people your age, you are also likely to want to have children at some point. Only 2% of Resolute Hearts say they never want children. You see yourself having a family and will most likely treat it as a safe haven. You’ll invest in your family, making it a priority in your life. And family will most likely be the greatest source of your happiness.

American journalist, Abrose Bierce, defined resolute this way: “Obstinate in a course that we approve.” And you definitely approve of marriage.

Res-o-lute/’reze,loot/

Adjective: Admirably purposeful, determined and unwavering.

Resolute Hearts

- 22% of singles, ages 18 to 30, have a “resolute hearts”
- They have traditional, optimistic views of marriage – expecting life-long love
- They feel in control of their life – they have a life plan and it includes marriage
- Education holds a strong and important value in their lives
- Religion plays a big part of their lives
- They are predominately Caucasian with a medium income
- The South and Midwest is where you’ll often find them – usually in the suburbs
- This group skews older than the other four groups
- This category has an equal number of men and women



What the Resolute Heart Needs to Know

Your Unfulfilled Expectations Can Get the Best of You

Because marriage is the centerpiece of your life's plan, and because you have a stronger motivation for marriage than any other segment in the population, you carry high expectations into your relationship. That's why it's imperative to examine your potential for unfulfilled expectations.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love." It's a great point and it makes sense in reverse, too. That is, where there is deep love there can be deep disappointment. Once you marry, your spouse is bound to fail at fulfilling an expectation that you may not even be aware you have. And you'll do the same to your spouse. That's when disappointment can set in.

You had it all set up in your mind: the way your partner would be romantic with you, would celebrate your birthday with you, would make decisions with you ... or any number of scenarios you had envisioned. But your wishes collided against reality.

Expectations, even the seemingly insignificant ones, can lead to problems when they are continually unfulfilled but continually held tight. Many of us erect mental images – unrealistic, unfair, biased or otherwise – of almost every facet of our relationship. These phantom images then become our inner focus. They steer our emotions and have the potential to set us up for failure. Not because we are fundamentally mismatched, but because our unmatched expectations lead us to disappointment. After all, we have staked everything on this person we marry. We have defined our very selves in terms of this choice. That's why we want our marriage to be everything we expect.

But it can't. No matter how dedicated and loving a husband and wife are as couple, they will disappoint each other – frequently. If you could sit in our counseling office and eavesdrop on the conversations we have with hurting couples, you'd never underestimate the destructive potential of unfulfilled expectations. You might hear the story, for example, of an anguished husband whose expectation of his wife staying at home with the children was not met. Or you might hear a devastated wife tell how she expected her husband to include her on major decisions and how angry she was when he took a job in another state before discussing it with her. You might hear a husband confess the disappointment he has in his married sex life because his expectations have never been met. Expectations, both big and small, both realistic and unreasonable, plague countless couples.

So what can you do to keep unfulfilled expectations from plaguing your marriage? You can heighten your awareness. Examine the expectations you're likely to bring into the relationship.

Make a list of every expectation you can think of. Talk about them. Make them known – to yourself and your partner. That way, when these expectations are not met, they don't hold as much unconscious power over you.

How Resolute Hearts Feel about Divorce

The pro-marriage attitude of Resolute Hearts leaves little room for any mention of divorce. While 50% of their peers would say "falling out of love" is grounds for divorce, only 16% of Resolute Hearts would agree with that. And when you ask Resolute Hearts what holds a marriage together they are likely to say their religious beliefs, forgiveness, commitment and their the value they place on marriage.





Having a Baby Doesn't Bring You Closer Together

Resolute Hearts not only see marriage as the centerpiece in their life, they feel just as strongly about having a family. Almost 90% say they want to have children soon or someday. And more often than not, they see having children as a means to make them closer. Of course, having a baby will supply countless magical moments between you, but it's not a ticket to deeper intimacy.

Studies show that when "baby makes three," conflicts increase eightfold; marriage takes a back seat; women feel overburdened and men feel shoved aside. By the baby's first birthday, most mothers are less happy about their marriage and some are wondering whether their marriage will even make it. Baby-

How Your Home Shaped Your Heart

And when it comes to married life, Resolute Hearts are more likely than any other group to have grown up in homes where they saw relatively good examples of loving and stable relationships. In fact, 77% of Resolute Hearts grew up with their parents being married (just 13% divorced) and they view their parent's marriage as stable, trusting, happy and emotionally fulfilling.

induced marital meltdowns are not uncommon. Through the help of researchers like Dr. John Gottman at the University of Washington, here's what we know: In the year after the first baby arrives, 70 percent of wives experience a precipitous plummet in their marital satisfaction. For the husband, the dissatisfaction usually kicks in later, as a reaction to his wife's unhappiness. It has little to do with whether a couple's baby is colicky or a good sleeper, whether she is nursing or bottle-feeding, working or staying at home. It simply has to do with how the addition to the family shifts the whole household dynamic.

How can something as good as a little baby turn a marriage so bad? We could point to a wide range of reasons: lack of sleep, feeling overwhelmed and unappreciated, the responsibility of caring for such a helpless little creature, juggling chores, financial stress, and lack of time to oneself, among other things. The root reason, however, is no big

mystery. In plain language, children take time and attention away from a marriage. They zap up hours out of the day and fill up every spare cell in your brain. Being a parent is wonderful, only somehow, it makes being a spouse . . . different. "Before kids, I was thrilled to hear my husband's voice on the phone," said Judy, a few years into motherhood. "Now after a day of meetings and phone calls and carpools and wet swimsuits, I sometimes wonder who is this guy who seems to want food, an audience, and — he's got to be joking — sex?"

Isn't it romantic?

Of course not. But a lack of romance and connection isn't inevitable during this phase of marriage. The fact is these are the good times. Someday you're going to look back on this period fondly — but only if both of you can keep this good thing from turning bad.





Leveraging Your Resolute Heart

- **If you're matched with a Rational Heart...** you're with someone who sees marriage in more practical terms than you do. While they are not as motivated to be married as you are (no other group is), they expect to be fulfilled by matrimony. But be prepared for more caution and a slow-going decision process. They are not as gung-ho for matrimony as you are. You'll likely have tension when it comes to the issue of living together before marriage arises. If you're like most Resolute Hearts, you're not in favor of it. Most Rational Hearts are. You'll also look at the option of divorce differently. While both of you are invested in a lifelong commitment, most Rational Hearts view divorce as an acceptable option if things don't work out. You likely share a similar education level (with Resolute Hearts' being slightly higher).

Bottom line? *If you can work through some differences, especially around values, your prospects for lifelong marriage are relatively good. But hear this: You've got some serious work to do.*

- **If you're matched with a Romantic Heart...** you're with someone who tends to see marriage through rose-colored glasses. They're looking for the "happily ever after" marriage. Like you, they are highly motivated to be married, but they see it in more magical terms than you do. While you're focused in on the dedication it takes to make marriage work, they're focused on the fairy tale of how they hope it will be. Unlike you, they believe there is one person out there for them and that person is going to meet all their needs. If that person is you, be prepared to sweep them off their feet. They're looking for a love story of cinematic proportions. You both prize the commitment it takes to make marriage work but, like every other group compared to you, Romantic Hearts are more open to divorce than you are.

Bottom line? *If you can get to a place where your partner is not disappointed in your relative lack of romantic ideals and where you sense your partner is deeply dedicated to you – and not just to the idea of loving you – your prospects for lifelong marriage are relatively good.*

- **If you're matched with a Restless Heart...** you're with someone who is definitely not ready for marriage. Their motivation for matrimony is low – at least for now. They are busy enjoying their freedom from responsibility. They not only lack the motivation to be married, but the skills as well. Interestingly, they fear ending up alone. So much so that they would rather marry the wrong person than not marry at all. Cringe! As you might guess, they also fear that marriage will hem them in and curtail their free spirited lifestyle.

Bottom line? *This match is not ideal for you. It's likely to bring about major strife and leave you questioning your own good judgment. This person has some growing up to do in order to be marriage-ready. Someday, as they mature and begin to take on more responsibilities, they can make a potentially good marriage partner for someone. But this is not that day and you probably are not that someone.*





• **If you're matched with a Reluctant Heart...** you're with someone who is the complete opposite of you when it comes to marriage. While marriage is the centerpiece of your life, this person is actually "anti-marriage." They've likely grown up in a home that is very different from your own and as a result they are cynical about lifelong love. They have the lowest marriage motivation of any segment. Not only do they fear commitment, they see divorce as perfectly acceptable when the going gets tough.

Bottom line? *This match is definitely not for you.*

• **If you're matched with a Resolute Heart...** you're with someone who shares your marriage mindset. You are simpatico. You're both highly motivated to be married and you're optimistic about it being a lifelong commitment. Neither of you sees divorce as acceptable. In fact, you'd both say it's not even an option. While you know there will be ups and downs in the relationship, you both expect to be fulfilled in your marriage and you're probably both inclined to have a family together. You likely treasure your shared traditional values.

Bottom line? *This like-minded match holds the greatest promise for you when it comes to lifelong love. No doubt about it.*



About the Authors

Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott are founders and codirectors of the Center for Relationship Development at Seattle Pacific University (SPU), and Leslie is a marriage and family therapist at SPU. The Parrotts are authors of *Real Relationships*, *Dot.com Dating*, *Crazy Good Sex*, *L.O.V.E. Your Time-Starved Marriage*, *Love Talk*, and the Gold Medallion Award-winning *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*. The Parrotts have been featured on Oprah, CBS This Morning, CNN, and The View, and in USA Today and the New York Times. They are also frequent guest speakers and have written for a variety of magazines. The Parrott's website, RealRelationships.com, features more than one thousand free video-on-demand pieces answering relationship questions. Les and Leslie live in Seattle, Washington with their two sons.

For more relationship ideas, check out these resources at twoofus.org:

- Article: [A Young Couple's Guide to Growing Old Together](#)
- Article: [10 Simple Ways to Make a Marriage Last](#)
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