

My Heart Chart

The Restless Heart

“I Need More Time”

What’s a Restless Heart?

You’ve heard the phrase, ants in your pants, right? It usually refers to a fidgety kid who never seems to sit still. This same restlessness is found in some young adults – especially uncommitted, cavalier males. They aren’t ready to settle down. They’re too busy messing around and exploring their options. They’re certainly not looking for more responsibility. In fact, words like dependable, conscientious, loyal, serious and responsible seldom enter the picture. Their “go-for-it” attitude is focused on fun. The fewer responsibilities they take on – including marriage – the more fun they believe they’ll have.

“A free spirit takes liberties even with liberty itself,” said French painter Francis Picabia. He could have been talking specifically about the Restless Heart. These individuals are risk takers, twice as likely as others to say that they would “do anything on a dare.” And they readily admit to taking more risks than others their age. The point is that they’re not giving much care to consequences. They don’t necessarily have a clear life plan. Having fun right now takes priority over any future fallout.

Do Restless Hearts ever want to be married? Sure. Seventy-two percent of them say they will marry someday. But not now. They’re not ready and they know it. They don’t have the motivation or the skill set, at present, to pull it off. Yet they do fear ending up alone. In fact, they are more likely than any other group to say (sadly) that they would rather eventually marry the wrong person than not marry at all. They carry an

Rest-less /restlas /

Adjective: Characterized by discontent or uneasiness.

Restless Hearts

- 22% of singles, ages 18 to 30, have “restless hearts”
- Marriage is a distant goal for this group
- Their ambivalence about marriage is reflected in their strong feeling for and against it
- They lack confidence in their skills to make marriage work
- Predominantly young males (70%)
- They are risk-takers and focused primarily on having fun
- They are ethnically diverse with higher incomes
- You are least likely to find them in the Midwest, and mostly in urban areas



obvious ambivalence about marriage. It offers some things they want, but at the same time, they fear it will be too demanding, too restrictive. So for now, these free spirits are not giving marriage anything close to serious attention.

What the Restless Heart Needs to Know

You've Got to Match Well to Marry Well

Perhaps the most startlingly finding in our entire survey of more than 3,600 was that the vast majority of Restless Hearts say they would rather marry the wrong person than not marry at all. Yikes! That doesn't bode well for a successful relationship. So let's be very clear: You don't have to settle for a spouse. You don't have to marry the wrong person. You can actually know with a significant level of confidence whether you are marrying the right person or not – before it's too late.

Sure, learning the skills that make a marriage work are important, but it starts with finding the right match. If you're like most people, you're inclined to find your potential partner based primarily on their looks. After all, you need to be attracted to the person. But beauty is only skin deep. As Dorothy Parker says, "ugly goes clean to the bone." In other words, just because we are physically attracted to someone doesn't mean that we're going to be attracted to their character, their inner qualities.

Restless Hearts, compared to others, don't give much thought to deeper attributes that make for a good match. When asked what qualities they think are important in a good marriage, they hem and haw, saying things like, "It's important to be nice and to be able to hang out together and talk and stuff." What they're really referring to is "chemistry" – that spark of attraction and likeability. They're also alluding to having a shared sense of humor ("I want someone who is funny and likes to laugh"). But that's about as deep as it gets.

So if and when you are ready to find the love of your life, create the best possible chance for a fulfilling marriage that goes the distance by considering your compatibility. Love cannot survive on physical attraction. You want a person with whom you can share deep and mutual trust. You don't want someone who exaggerates or lies to you, or who tries to manipulate you. If you want to have children, you want your spouse to teach similar values to those children. Here's a list of qualities to keep in mind in determining if you're a good match:

How Restless Hearts Feel about Divorce

The fear of a failed marriage causes Restless Hearts to say divorce is not acceptable in their family or among their friends. Relative to their peers, they have a greater tolerance for physical abuse (just 75% see it as grounds for divorce, compared to 91% by their peers). And the same is true for drug use. But Restless Hearts have less tolerance for a lack of sexual fulfillment. Still, they are far more likely than their peers not to get married for fear of possible divorce. When asked what holds a marriage together they are likely to say loyalty.



- Emotional Health – Can they manage their emotions with a stable tone?
 - Strong Character – Do they have integrity?
 - Energy Level – Is it similar to your own?
 - Financial Security – Do they share similar values on money with you?
 - Conflict Resolution – Do they work hard to stay on the same page?



- Spiritual Harmony – Do they share the religious values you hold?
- Shared Interests – Are there activities you have in common?
- Interest in Parenting – Do you agree on having kids or not?
- Ambition – Are they laid-back or a go-getter?
- Bad traits – Do they exhibit laziness or arrogance or have bad habits like gambling, excessive drinking, etc.?

As you can see from this list, compatibility is about far more than whether you like the same kind of movies or music. So consider this list as a place to start. Add to it and design your list of qualities that will help you match well to marry well. If you do this with sincere intention, you will nearly extinguish the possibility of marrying the wrong person.

Marriage Doesn't Mean Losing Your Freedom

Did you know that the happiest people on the planet are married? It's true. Numerous research studies on happiness show that married folks tend to be happier than their single counterparts. Consider the findings: Married men and women report less depression, less anxiety, and lower levels of other types of psychological distress than do those who are single, divorced or widowed. But that's not all. Marital status is one of the most important predictors of happiness. Forty percent of married people

say they are very happy with their life in general, compared to just under a quarter of those who are single or who are cohabiting.

The point is that marriage doesn't cost you your freedom or your identity. Quite the contrary: When you are in a vibrant marriage, you feel more content and free than you've ever felt before. Why? Because when you're sharing a life together the old cliché rings true: you double your joy and cut your sorrow in half.

Whether you're single or married, as you get older you will take on more responsibility. Some singles might argue that they have the freedom to hop in the car and head to Vegas or the mountains because they have no one waiting at home to tell them that they can't go. Of course, these same people have jobs and other commitments that keep them from being

able to head out of town whenever the mood strikes them. That's life ... but it's not necessarily married life. Some people may perceive being unattached as having more freedom, but it's really an illusion.

In a healthy marriage, when the husband wants to go out with the guys, for example, he checks in with his wife to see if she is counting on him to pick up the kids or something like that. If not, he's set to meet up with his crew. A normal wife doesn't pummel him with questions or try to guilt him into staying home. Now, if you marry someone who has a paranoid bent to his or her personality, that's another story. That's when what should be quick conversations become full-blown discussions. Your spouse wants to know every detail and insists you obtain "permission" from him or her before doing nearly

How Your Home Shaped Your Heart

While they are more likely to have stayed married (just 17% divorced), the parents of Restless Hearts are more likely than any other group to have done so "for the sake of the kids." Restless Hearts tend to be a bit closer to mom than dad and, more than most, describe their parents' marriage as business-like.



anything. This type of spouses wants to maintain ongoing cell phone contact to be sure they are “in the know.” Of course, that’s no way to live ... only dysfunctional couples operate this way. That’s why the previous point about matching well to marry well is vital. For the most part, you only sacrifice your freedom in marriage when you make a poor match by marrying someone who is paranoid or insecure.

Leveraging Your Restless Heart

- **If you’re matched with a Resolute Heart...** you’re with someone who fully embraces traditional marriage and sees it as the centerpiece of his or her life. This is a person who is not only highly motivated to be married, but one who is also dedicated to raising a family. They fully expect their marriage to be lifelong. They are “values-driven” and tend to frown upon cohabitation. They also do not see divorce is not an option. And because you could potentially open the door to divorce under certain circumstances, this is likely to be a major point of contention.

Bottom line? *You’re not ready to marry now, but when you are, this match holds some potential for you. You’ll have a lot of growing up to do if you want to attract and maintain a relationship with a Resolute Heart ... but it would be worth the effort. If you’re like most Restless Hearts, you want to marry someday and finding a match in this group will eventually serve you well.*

- **If you’re matched with a Rational Heart...** you’re with someone who sees marriage in very practical terms. While they are moderately motivated to be married, they expect to be fulfilled by the relationship when they do.

Bottom line? *This is an unlikely match for you. After all, a Rational Heart will likely move in the opposite direction of your cavalier spirit. But if you were to be in a long-term relationship with a Rational Heart, you could learn a lot from him or her. These types take marriage very seriously and someday you will, too.*

- **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. They are far more highly motivated to marry than you are. They believe there is one person out there for them and that person is going to have to sweep them off their feet. They’re looking for a love story of cinematic proportions.

Bottom line? *This partner is bound to be disappointed in your cavalier and restless spirit. They’re looking for long-term romantic. You’re looking for fun right now. It’s not an ideal match. But someday, as you mature, you just might find that you’re a bit of a romantic yourself.*

- **If you’re matched with a Reluctant Heart...** you’re with someone who is actually “anti-marriage.” They’ve likely grown up in a home that is unstable and fractured. 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? *You’re not ready for marriage and neither are they. Period.*





- **If you're matched with a Restless Heart...** you're with someone who shares your marriage mindset. Neither of you are motivated to marry – at least for now. You're both busy enjoying your freedom from responsibility and fear that marriage will hem you in and curtail your lifestyle. You're not likely, during this carefree season of your life, to want to learn the skills you'll need for lifelong love. However, you both share a fear of ending up alone ... so much so that you would both rather marry the wrong person than not marry at all. Don't fall into this trap.

Bottom line? *Even though you're in the same camp, you're not ready for marriage. This match is not an ideal one primarily because you're both impulsive and not likely to give marriage the serious consideration it requires. You both have some growing up to do in order to be marriage-ready. Someday, as you mature and begin to take on more responsibilities, you'll both hold positive potential for building a lasting marriage. But that's not for now and this is probably not the person.*



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.

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