

# My Heart Chart

## The Romantic Heart

“We’ll Live Happily Ever After”

### What’s a Romantic Heart?

We can begin to answer this question by understanding the origins of the word, romance, which is derived from the Latin word “Romanicus,” meaning “of the Roman style.” What’s that, you ask? It has to do with the medieval notion of chivalric adventures combined with tales of love. You know, rescuing damsels in distress. You’ve been reading these stories and watching movies with these themes for as long as you can remember. Rapunzel. Snow White. Sleeping Beauty. Lois Lane and Superman. Olive Oyl and Popeye. The list goes on. It’s a classic theme in our culture. A beautiful young woman is placed in a dire predicament by a villain or a monster and requires a hero to dash in to save her.

Of course, we don’t expect our real love life to be characterized by such scenarios. How many couples do you know where the man rescued the woman from a monster or a villain? But for the Romantic Heart, there’s still an element of chivalry. These caricatures of romance aren’t necessarily the core of this attitude though. At the center of it all is an idealism that expects love to be lived out with unending passion and ongoing intimacy. Love, for the Romantic Heart, is idyllic. For the Romantic Heart, love always stands strong, overcomes all and is the source of unending bliss.

The German philosopher Nietzsche said, “Love is the state in which man sees things most widely different from what they are.” And that’s the risk of the Romantic Heart – allowing love’s ideal to blur their vision of the work that lifelong love so often requires.

**Ro-man-tic/ro’mantik/**

*Adjective: Inspired by the ideal of affection and love.*

## Romantic Hearts

- 19% of singles, ages 18 to 30, have “romantic hearts”
- They are often young females (67%) believing in the existence of their Prince Charming
- Don’t have much of a structured plan; life “just happens” for them
- Education is not valued as much by them
- They believe there is one person out there for them
- You’re most likely to find them in small towns in the south and Midwest



## What the Romantic Heart Needs to Know

### Love Is Not Enough

When we marry, we vow to love “until death do us part.” Without love there would be no wedding and certainly no marriage. Love is the catalyst for commitment. Love is what insures that every marriage starts out good. But sooner or later, every good marriage bumps into bad things. And that’s when couples discover that love, no matter how good, is never enough.

Every marriage starts out not simply to survive but to thrive. But here’s the kicker: One cannot completely guard one’s love against the things that diminish it. What’s more, love in itself is seldom sturdy enough to support a couple when they inevitably run into bad things. In fact, the loss of love is given as a major reason for marital dissolution. Love, while being a good catalyst for marriage, cannot sustain it alone.

Many people cling to the sentimental romantic notion of love expressed in songs, movies and novels. It is a concept that leads most people into a destructive marital myth that says: Everything good in this relationship should get better in time. But the truth is while many things improve because of marriage, some things become more difficult. Every successful marriage, for example, requires necessary losses. Even to people who have dreamed for years about getting married and who hate being alone, marriage cannot help but come as an invasion of privacy and independence.

No one has ever been married without being surprised at the intensity of this invasion. For many, this realization represents the first real challenge to their love. But it will not be their last.

Marriage is continually bombarded by unpredictable circumstances that interfere with being the kind of lovers we want to be. We are torn apart by busy schedules, by words we wish we could take back, in short, by not giving all that love deserves.

“Love asks for everything,” writes Mike Mason in *The Mystery of Marriage*. “Not just for a little bit, or a whole lot, but for everything.” And how hard it is to give everything! Indeed, it is impossible. No one, no matter how loving, can stand up to the test. Be certain of this: you and your spouse will fail at love sometimes. Why? Because no mere mortal can ever live by love alone. Ideal love does not work in an ideal world; it works within the limits of our ordinary lives.

That’s why love – at least the romantic infusion of love that Hollywood pumps into our culture – is not enough. Nevertheless, for the couple who matures together in love, there is a great surprise in store: their marriage, though bandied about by some bad things, can remain good.

### How Romantic Hearts Feel about Divorce

Divorce is an acceptable option to Romantic Hearts – especially if it’s related to cheating, dishonesty or violence. Additionally, 32% of Romantic Hearts say “finding someone else” is grounds for divorce. When you ask Romantic Hearts what holds a marriage together, they are likely to say love and trust.



### Romantic Love Will Ebb and Flow

Your longing for a profound, all-consuming connection with a soul mate is in your wiring. The yearning for fulfillment through love seems to be to your psychic structure what food and water are to your cells. And if it’s not, our culture does its best to make it so.



Beauty and the Beast, Snow White and her handsome prince, Cinderella and Prince Charming. These stories have shaped your consciousness. It's not just these fairy tale characters of childhood who have captured our collective imagination, however. We're constantly bombarded by visions of romance. All you have to do is turn on the radio or television or open any magazine. Everywhere we turn, we're faced with glamorized versions of love.

Trying to forge an authentic relationship amidst all the romantic hype makes what is already a tough proposition even harder. It leaves many wondering whether they are falling in love with a person or simply with love itself. And once the proverbial question is popped and the wedding machine is set in motion, it leaves many wondering whether they are really ready to get hitched in the first place.

## How Your Home Shaped Your Heart

Despite their desire for marriage, Romantic Hearts are more likely to have grown up in homes where they were raised by a divorced, single parent. In fact, only 49% of Romantic Hearts grew up with their parents being married (31% divorced) and view their parent's marriage as somewhat tense.

"All beginnings are lovely," a French proverb tells us. That's particularly true of a promising new marriage. But no matter how lovely, a beginning is only a beginning. Time will tell if a relationship is built to go the distance. But you put the odds in your favor when you accept a single fact: love is not static. Love is not something you fall into and out of. Love is fluid. It rises and falls like the tide. "When you love someone," writes Anne Morrow Lindbergh in her book, *Gift from the Sea*, "you do not love them all the time, in exactly the same way, from moment to moment." It's impossible. Yet this is what the Romantic Heart is inclined to request. To make a relationship last, you've got to give that up that expectation. Have faith in the ebb and flow of love. You'll

need to work every day at being in love. Don't get sucked under by the happily-ever-after myth. You can build a love that transcends this fantasy by accepting the fact that love is forever fluid.

## Leveraging Your Romantic 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 person is not only highly motivated to be married, as you are, but is also dedicated to raising a family. They fully expect their marriage to be lifelong. They are "values-driven" and 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 point of contention. They are also more likely than you to see the marriage road as sometimes bumpy. But they are fully dedicated to work at getting through the tough patches.

**Bottom line?** *While you're not exactly a like-minded match, your prospects for lifelong marriage are relatively good. You'll have some differences to work out, for sure. But if you are willing to make some compromises and adjust your romantic expectations a bit, you can learn from each other and build a lasting marriage together.*

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- **If you're matched with a Rational Heart...** you're with someone who sees marriage in more practical terms than you do. Dramatically so. They don't believe in a soul mate. You do. And while they are moderately motivated to be married and they expect to be fulfilled by matrimony, they are not nearly as idealistic about love as you are. You both see divorce as a viable option if necessary.

**Bottom line?** *If you can work through some significant differences between you, especially your differing perspectives on love and romance, your prospects for lifelong marriage are moderately good. But hear this: You've got some serious work to do to put the odds in your favor.*

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- **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. As a Romantic Heart, you may be tempted to just go with this person's cavalier approach, but don't do it. 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 has a very different perspective on marriage than you do. While you are marriage motivated, this person 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?** *This match is definitely not for you.*

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- **If you're matched with a Romantic Heart...** you're with someone who shares your marriage mindset. You are simpatico. You both have a high motivation to be married and you both view love and marriage in idealistic terms. If you're getting serious with each other, you're both likely to view the other as a soul mate. You both expect to be fulfilled by marriage and you expect it to be a near storybook reality that endures for a lifetime. However, you also both say you'd consider divorce if it doesn't work out.

**Bottom line?** *This like-minded match will likely present some challenges. Sure, you have a lot in common. But your romantic attitudes tend to create a strong start, only to wane a bit if mutual expectations in the relationship are not being met. At the outset of your love story, your romantic passions can't help but attack your practical reasoning. It takes work to keep romance alive – even when you both prize it. Therefore, your shared idealistic values for marriage can*





*create a positive prospect for lifelong love only if you are both willing to acknowledge that your romance will naturally ebb and flow. Do that, and learn the fundamentals of a healthy marriage, and the two of you can enjoy lifelong love together.*



### **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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