

Rules of the Game

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By Kimberly Gadette

You're a runner. She drives around the parking lot at the mall three times to find the space closest to the entrance.

You're a triathlete, bent on acceptance in the next Iron Man qualifier. He says exercising his vocal chords while screaming for his Sacramento Kings is all the workout he needs.

At 5:00 a.m., one's crawling into bed while the other's jumping out of it.

Do opposites attract? Or do birds of a feather stick together? Can the athlete who's bent on winning the match ... meet a match?

Well, gee, says the wise man. It's a little bit of this, a little bit of that. There's no true balance unless your teeter knows how to totter.

I often hear singles saying, "I don't want a clone. If I wanted to meet another me, what would be the point?" True, but depending on one's individual comfort level, what seems like a clone to one person is perfect for another.

The first step is to truly know yourself. Consider the following list and decide which shared interests/ideologies are necessary, on the bubble, or of no importance whatsoever:

- Politics
- Religion
- Sexual appetite
- Athletic mastery
- Types of music
- Types of films
- Diet
- Humor
- Hobbies
- Desire to have children
- Intelligence: ivy league college or high school dropout?
- Work-a-holic or living from weekend to weekend?
- Money: a saver or a spender?
- TV: primetime, reality, soaps or cable?
- Sun worshipper or vampire?
- Drinking: wine, beer, the hard stuff or abstainer?
- Night person or day person?
- Hard body, soft body or in between?
- Travel: close to home or foreign? Roughing it or only high-end hotels?

Given all these factors, suddenly finding one's athletic match may not be as important, as say, a woman who would be willing to sign a pre-nup. Or someone who's managed to stay out of prison for the last ten years.

But if having a mate who doubles as a cycling buddy is of the ultimate importance, then choosing a couch potato is doomed at the first planting.

Couples who can't imagine a separate life sometimes go so far as to work together. Some do fine; others end up with dissolved businesses right along with their relationships. The successful couples seem to utilize their individual strengths, e.g., she's the money manager, more comfortable pushing the paper, and he's the "people" person, happy to deal with customers, vendors, etc.

But more frequently, the idea of both halves of the team going out into the world and then returning to their nest to share the day's different stories and experiences, seems to be far more workable. And fun. After all, and after the first glow of new sex, there'd better be something else to discuss other than pillow talk.

So it's both yin and yang, pro and con, to and fro. Vivé la difference, as well as the shared activities that bind a couple. He might marathon, but he loves to create culinary experiments right along with her. She might belong to three different cycling clubs, but how they love to share popcorn and the latest comedy at the movieplex.

In the long run, literally, it's the couple's ability to bend without breaking, that matters.

The necessity for compromise, whether it's about your relatives or her parakeet, is a great litmus test. If she wrinkles her dainty nose at your sweaty running clothes, what's going to happen the first time your Rottweiler gets sick all over her pristine white carpet? If he will never rise at dawn in order to scream himself hoarse for you at the finish line, what other areas might he refuse to offer up his support? A career change?

Like they say about cycling: It's all about balance.