

The Great Marriage Hoax: Why There's More to Life Than Getting Married



By Ché Blackwood

If romantic comedies and romance novels are to be believed, all single women are on a crazed mission to marry the man of their dreams. They aren't on a journey to know themselves, find a job they love, test out their creativity or enjoy life: those are all secondary goals on the road to getting a husband. Of course, Hollywood also says women wear makeup to bed, so it's clear that cinema doesn't always portray things the way they really are. In the real world, humans are complex, and true inner happiness takes more than sporting a ring on your finger. Before getting swept up in the mighty

hype of marriage, take stock of these components of your life and be sure you're nourishing them as well:

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1. Your goals: Planning ahead, working hard and motivating yourself to accomplish your personal goals are some of life's most rewarding challenges. The more you accomplish, the more your life will open up. Go back to school, save enough money to buy a brand new car, write a book, whatever. Once you start meeting your goals, you'll realize just how capable you are. Plus, you'll be happier. Without achieving personal fulfillment on your own, you'll never be completely fulfilled while in a relationship.

2. Your fears: It's scary to take risks, because when you do you can often lose something. Of course, you'll also find new benefits when you take chances. Moving to a new city could make you lonely, but it also could open your world to romantic restaurants, new friends and amazing experiences. Even if you fail, the rewards of learning from your mistakes are too large to miss out on. Until you feel comfortable facing your fears, you won't be able to navigate the tough waters of love. Nothing is as risky as leaving your heart in the hands of someone else, and it's too difficult to even attempt until you've learned how to lose as well as win.

3. Your career: It might seem obvious, but if you can't provide for yourself, you're also going to have a hard time providing for anyone else. Full-time jobs, high salaries and executive positions are never required for happiness, but you definitely need some type of income. In this economy, an even greater challenge is finding a job you actually like. If you feel accomplished, recognized and appreciated at work, your overall happiness at home and with your partner will skyrocket.

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4. Your friends: Taking trips, talking until the early morning and sipping wine after a hard week are some of the sweeter moments of a friendship. However, maintaining such bonds take a lot more than just the ability to have fun. Friendships take work, patience and commitment. If you listen to your girlfriend vent for three hours over her boss, you'll learn that while no relationship is easy, they're all worth the effort. Take the time out of your busy schedule and nurture those relationships. The better friend you are, the better friends you'll receive in return.

What makes you happiest outside of your relationship? Tell us in the comments below.