

The Pros and Cons of a Long Engagement



By Marni Battista

The latest news in Hollywood is Britney Spears and Jason Trawick's somewhat long-anticipated breakup. The couple met when Trawick was Brit-Brit's talent agent, and he gradually transitioned to her beau post-Keven Federline divorce. The two had been engaged for just over a year, and we presume one of their resolutions must have been to start off 2013 single.

They parted amicably, according to their reps, but could the lengthy engagement have caused the split? Or did it just make it clearer that they should call off the whole thing?

If you've already been divorced and are engaged to be married

a second time – like Spears was – it’s a good idea to discuss if you’re setting a wedding date immediately or planning to take it slow.

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A year-long engagement in the ‘50s and ‘60s would have seemed endless to a blushing future bride, but these days it seems to be more common. In fact, modern couples are holding their “I do’s” for two, three, even five years before actually tying the knot. There are plenty of reasons: costs of a wedding, the pressure of daily life (it’s hard to schedule a manicure, let alone pick a wedding date) and commitment anxiety. While it makes sense for some couples that are on a second or third marriage, is it really better to wait it out?

PRO: You get ample time to figure out if you’re truly a match.

Although the core idea of being engaged is that you’ve both already decided you want to be together long-term, having a lengthy engagement can help ensure you’re making the right choice. In Spears’s case, it seems that this is exactly what happened: they weren’t a great match.

When you’re in a healthy, serious relationship, you’re openly communicating about your values and goals...and by the time you get to an engagement, you hopefully have decided you’re a good fit in multiple ways.

However, time will certainly tell. Being committed to each other on a higher level than being boyfriend and girlfriend should bring more conversations and actions that will help prove to you whether or not you’re on the right path. Ideally, you’ll be sure that you’re both on the same page, and you’ll be able to make the right decision *before* getting married.

In addition, a lengthy engagement can ensure that children from previous marriages have time to adjust to a new person in

the parent role, which can ultimately create a better transition from mom's boyfriend to stepdad.

CON: Lack of marriage can indicate to the other person a lack of commitment.

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A lengthy engagement can certainly be interpreted by one person that the other person isn't fully invested in the relationship. If you choose to have a long engagement period, make sure you're clear as to why you're choosing to wait and that the items on the "when this happens, we'll be ready" list are specific and measurable. Communicate consistently regarding how those benchmarks are going to be hit and be open to shifting them if the results take longer than anticipated.

When you're fighting with your fiancé, you can simply decide to leave...whereas when you're in a marriage, people seem more likely to want to work out the issues to save their relationship. Additionally, there is data that supports the fact that modern society may be growing indifferent about the institution of marriage. It's an important issue to discuss with your fiancé. Together, you should decide a realistic time period for your engagement; being open about it will help give clarity to your individual feelings and can also bring you closer.

There are both pros and cons to a lengthy engagement; you will just have to decide for yourself what time frame is best for you.

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