

## 7 Principles for a Smart Relationship

‘How do you know if you love someone enough so the marriage will last?’ asked a teenager at an area school. “I’m never getting married ‘cause you never know,” answered a classmate. While it is true that you really guarantee that a marriage will last but, there are several things to consider as a relationship develops.

I recently taught a group of teens at two area schools a curriculum entitled *Relationship Smarts*. This curriculum is evidence-based and focused on healthy and unhealthy relationships. It helps teens become aware of warning signs and healthy signs when forming relationships.

It was easy to begin the discussion about chemical attraction that usually begins a relationship. Most teens, even if they have not dated, have felt attraction to a member of the opposite sex.

But, some teens think physical attraction is the most important thing and often don’t look beyond that. Most hadn’t really thought about the following three areas that can often make or break a relationship.

We discussed the need for common interests, common values and common goals. Most couples who are together for a long time share interests, values and goals. They also provide encouragement for each other and respect each other.

Through the ten weeks of sessions, we discussed the seven principles for a smart relationship which include:

1. Seek a good match—someone with common interests.
2. Pay attention to values.
3. Don’t try to change someone into someone he or she is not.
4. Don’t change yourself to get someone’s love or friendship.
5. Expect good communication.
6. Don’t play games, be phoney, or pressure someone.
7. Expect *respect*. Have standards for what you expect.

Whether you are a teen or a seasoned adult, these seven principles apply to your relationships. The earlier you learn them and live by them, the more likely you are to have a long-lasting, healthy relationship.