



# Marriage Rules<sup>©</sup>

## “CAN FRIENDS BE LOVERS?”

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“Can friends be lovers?”

Some would say “yes” because the ultimate expression of friendship is love. To love is to befriend and to be ‘friended’ is to be loved.

One common belief is that we are beings capable of many appetites. Some of us love art. Some of us love music. Some of us love to work with our hands. Some of us love to work with our minds. And some of us like to work with our hearts.

It is as though the essence of life is to be in love with love, itself, and all of its vicissitudes.

A corollary belief is that if we can love one person, then surely we can love two. If two, then four, and if four, then why not more?

Who is to say “each to each” must be the only rule?

And where does the line really begin and end between close friendship and love? For is not true friendship, an expression of the truth of friendship and love at its core?

Others might say that lovers can be friends but friends cannot be lovers. The reasoning is that the ultimate expression of love is friendship.

Between people who love one another, friendship is the true reality. What occurs in the relationship occurs to enhance, to challenge, to nurture and to delight in the friend.

Exploitation for any reason is typically forbidden!

It is frowned upon as an unhealthy tactic designed to maneuver the other to a position of imbalance or loss.

Whoever ‘wins’ eventually loses in the end.

What is won is a hollow and temporary victory. What is lost is the trust which inheres in the friendship that emanates from mature (i.e., non-possessive) love; the foundation of trust becomes deeply fractured.

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In order to responsibly address our original question, we must somehow or other attempt to redefine the boundaries of friendship and of love.

Friendship may perhaps best be defined as an interpersonal system whose purpose is to exchange need-contingencies (strokes) with a minimum of risk. In a sense, it is like a bank account. You get back what you put in plus a little “interest”.

Love, on the other hand, is more circumscribed because the risk and the commitment are greater.

Love may, therefore, be likened to digging for gold. First, you must stake your claim. Then you begin to “mine” your prospects. If after a few unsuccessful attempts nothing happens, you are then faced with a critical choice -- to move on where the grass looks greener or to stay put and continue working your “mine”, all-the-while, ignoring the seduction of iron pyrite (“fool’s gold”).

The key to successful prospecting has less to do with luck and more to do with dedication and fidelity of purpose. This can only be accomplished by a continuing investment of very hard work. Nothing in life comes easy. And next to waking up in the morning and getting up out of bed, the second most difficult task each of us face will be creating (and if need be, re-creating, day-in and day-out,) is the challenge of making meaningful relationships succeed.

The root word in meaningful is “me” and it is the “me” in the word meaningful which ultimately provides the standard against which friendship or love can be assessed.

(What is good for you  
May not be good for me  
And what is good for me  
May not be good for you....  
But while you can deceive me  
And I can fool you  
Both of us know what  
For the ‘me’ in us is true!)

“Can friends be lovers?”

In theory, perhaps, but in the flesh and blood and guts world of real-life practice, what do you think?

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