

Couples more likely to kick on through shared goals

Prasanna Panditharatne

Consulting Psychologist



FORGET the roses on Valentine's Day. If you want your relationship to survive, you'd be better advised to come up with a joint mission statement.

A survey of 600 Melbournians has found that pursuing common goals with the same intensity is the key to lasting love. Compatible star signs don't rate a mention.

Monash University PhD psychology student Prasanna Panditharatne said his survey found the rules for relationship harmony applied equally to work, friends, family and romantic relationships. "The idea is that if you want these goals to a different extent to your partner, that is what starts to cause the arguments and conflict," he said. "Opposites attract is a real fallacy and one of those bits of romantic folklore. Birds of a feather flock together."

People's goals tend to reflect their ideals and societal standards and when they are not pursued with equal fervor, partners feel they are on different wavelengths, he said. Goals include expectations for financial security and wanting the same number of children. But Mr. Prasanna concedes it could be problematic inquiring about a prospective partner's 10-year plan in the initial stages of a relationship.

"Once a partner becomes aware they want a goal to a different extent, it promotes harmony if you learn to accommodate differences," he said.

Health researcher Sally Dunlop, 26, believes her six-year relationship has strengthened from developing common goals with her partner, Anthony Marrow. "We both aim towards career satisfaction and advancement; we would both like to be comfortably well off ..."

After 36 years of marriage, St Kilda couple Glenda and Tony McCombe believes common values are the key to marital bliss more than goals. "When we got married, we didn't speak of (goals) then but I think people these days do not learn the values of life and are more materialistic," Mrs McCombe said. Her husband had another take: "The secret is to have the last word and make sure it is 'yes dear'."

To talk to an APS psychologist today, ask your GP for a referral to PBP Consultancy or simply write to prabu1@pbpconsultancy.com or visit www.pbpconsultancy.com or T/+61 41639056