

happen because love doesn't come with instructions

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DOES CHEMISTRY = COMPATIBILITY?

While sparks are a good sign, they don't guarantee your compatibility as a couple. Here's why...

By **Judy Mandell**

Many couples appear outwardly like polar opposites, but their diversity seems to make their relationships work. For example: Stephanie Adams met her husband, Charles, four years ago on Match.com. On paper, you couldn't find a more disparate pair.

Stephanie describes Charles as a modest, quiet, country type from the Midwest; he's a conservative, introverted, Christian, heterosexual, Anglo-featured white male doctor. She, on the other hand, is a New Yorker who's a flamboyant city type; she's a radical, esoteric, black, bisexual, exotic-featured female author. Stephanie prefers hot weather; Charles likes it cold. He gets up early, while she gets up late. He loves to swim, and she likes to lie in the sun. He is a Cancer; his wife's a Leo. "We're literally the sun and the moon — direct opposites, but our existence blends together peacefully as we complement each other and help to build up our strengths as a family," says Stephanie. "Even though we are quite different, our chemistry enabled us to realize right from the start that we were soul mates. We feel the same way today as we did on the first day we met — an instant and powerful bond."

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Three surefire chemistry signs

Chemistry is a very strong indicator of relationship success, but it's not the whole

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enchilada, according to relationship advice expert April Masini, author of *Date Out of Your League*. "Chemistry is like a strong drug that attracts people to each other, even when they don't seem like they'd be a good match," she says. So, what are the signs that you and another person have chemistry? Here are Masini's top three picks:

1. A smoldering glance that's actually conveying heat. Your partner gives you that look, and you just *melt*. When you and another person have chemistry, you can actually feel yourself heat up. In fact, flushing in someone's presence is a sure sign of chemistry.

2. Feeling butterflies in your stomach. Saying that "you feel butterflies" around someone or that a person "gives you butterflies in your stomach" are a good way to tell if you have chemistry. We've all felt it at some point, if we're lucky — a feeling that isn't normal, and usually only happens when you're in the presence of someone with whom you've got a strong attraction. It comes on suddenly, because that's how attraction works. If you feel those telltale butterflies, you've got chemistry.

3. Feeling happy when you're around that particular person. If you feel happy and your problems seem to fade away when you're in someone's presence, then you have chemistry. Anyone who makes you lose focus on everything else except the good feeling you have around that person is someone with whom you have chemistry. On the down side, this kind of chemistry can make you careless at work or procrastinate on things that you should be getting accomplished, because all you want to do is be in this particular person's presence.

Craig Malkin, a clinical psychologist at Harvard Medical School, says that we all need to redefine what we mean by saying we've got "chemistry" with another person. "You must have some basic physical attraction for there to be any chemistry at all," Malkin explains. "But something else also happens with the way people respond to and complement one other, and the way they've learned to interact in their relationships. When two individual's styles fit — i.e., when they create psychological synergy — that's when you have chemistry."

Still confused? Ask yourself these six questions...

Malkin says that asking yourself the following questions will help you figure out whether the two of you have chemistry... or not:

1. Do you feel attracted enough to the other person? If you don't feel even a tiny spark for your date, then you're probably missing a key ingredient of chemistry.

2. Are there moments where everything seems to click? Chemistry means that you should feel like you can be yourself and simply have fun when you're together.

3. Do you feel like your differences help you appreciate each other more instead of creating distance between the two of you? You want the former to be true when you're together, not the latter.

4. Does turning to each other for support feel easy and natural? You should be able to share important thoughts and feelings comfortably with each other and expect to be understood by this person.

5. Do you feel open to sharing new experiences with your date? You want to have that sense that even if you haven't done something before, you're more than willing to

explore it now that the two of you are together.

6. Do you feel like it's relatively easy to get closer to this person? It's important to feel as if you can relax into each other's arms with a sense of mutual trust.

Dan Collins has had relationships where there was strong chemistry between himself and his partner, but he always walked away, because they weren't really compatible. "There's

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a lot more that's important than whether or not you 'click' with someone," says Collins. "What matters most to me is knowing that this person share the same values, is of a similar mind, actually understands me, appreciates me — and ultimately, loves and cares about me. There may be things you'll disagree about, but these are never the 'big things' — i.e., arguing about who takes out the trash — but not about how rude or angry or unfocused the other person is. Conflict about details is one thing; when it's about substance, that's

completely different."

Chemistry naturally ebbs and flows in healthy relationships, and that's why a phrase like "working on your relationship" is often bandied about. "Young people who feel chemistry for the first, second, or even the third time think that chemistry will be enough to see them through anything," says Masini. "That's where those phrases from songs and poems come from: 'Love will find a way;' 'All you need is love;' 'Love overcomes all obstacles' — but in reality, that's simply not true. You can love someone, but it doesn't mean that person's a good partner or that love is enough to make your relationship last. So when you *do* find someone you love and actually are compatible with, keeping that chemistry alive is important."

How to keep the chemistry alive in your relationship

Want your sizzling chemistry to last? Here are Masini's top three tips for maintaining chemistry in your relationship:

1. Make the relationship a priority — and by that, I mean the chemistry in the relationship.

2. Cultivate date nights, regular sex and affection, as well as an appreciation for your partner.

3. Don't let yourself go once you're partnered up. I see this way too often where women get men by looking hot, sexy and alluring — then they stop wearing makeup, putting on sexy heels and have a drawer full of granny panties stashed where Victoria's Secret used to reign. No wonder your man is looking elsewhere! Make your best self — as in, the self you were when you got him — the norm.

Professional matchmaker and relationship expert Samantha Daniels says that most (if not all) of these chemistry signs are necessary for any relationship to survive:

1. You find the same things to be funny, and the same things annoy both of you.
2. You find things to talk about with each other, even when there's nothing going on.
3. You know how to get each other out of a bad mood in ways that no one

else can.

4. You have a secret language that only the two of you share and understand.
5. You can give each other looks that signify things which no one else would be able to relate to except your partner.
6. You still get butterflies when you see your partner, even though you see each other all the time.
7. You know what the other person's thinking without either of you saying a word.

Judy Mandell is a freelance writer based in North Garden, Virginia.

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