

## The Relationship Quotient

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People live together for children and grandchildren. Where does a couple live for themselves?

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Much has been written over the last few years about emotional quotient. Earlier there was a pre-occupation with intelligent quotient. In the recent past much has been said about spiritual quotient. From an existential perspective it would be welcome to now look at what I would term 'relationship quotient'; how much of this is present in predefined relationships, in emerging relationships and those that might foster in later years of one's life.



David Schnarch in his seminal book *Passionate Marriage* says, and I paraphrase, “in an intimate relationship, the one who wants it less controls it”. What makes relationships falter, especially intimate ones? Is it disappointment owing to unmet needs and expectations or is it simply fatigue?

Marriages that have weathered storms, that have gone beyond the threshold of the period of wait, that have lasted well into decades, suddenly lose luster and become barren!

This of course is not taking away from those marriages that have lasted long and well and where companionship has supplanted mere romance. Having said this it does not deny the truth that over years many marriages do become transactional. One lives in the relationship, first for the children and then for grandchildren who appear. Where does the couple live for themselves?

Many argue that this is natural, yet the same couple in the first year of marriage sought one another out. This they do less of as years pass.

In the beginning a chivalrous husband will rush to his wife's aid when she needs to complete a domestic chore. As years lapse, the husband is less forthcoming in his offer and more often than not the wife has to tend to these requirements on her own.

Age and life's many distractions are attributed for this apparent ennui. Compulsions of being available for others too are a cause, say some. Yet the husband who was keen and willing to hold his wife's hand, most certainly, in the first year of marriage, now walks

ahead of her when going for an evening walk, while the wife trudges a short distance behind.

Even more apparent is the complete lack of conversation that passes between them as they set out for their customary walk.

When at home, both watch the television, unmindful of the other or better still unconcerned about one another and completely glued to the TV, till it is time to have dinner. Dinner too is eaten in silence and the two retire for the night with little exchange of words, more importantly with unshared feelings.

However if one or the other should suddenly pass on, a void appears and then there is deep, unsaid remorse at lost opportunity.

This also perhaps is not completely true for we only miss the presence, not what that person meant, and the mourning is for loss of the physical being not for what might have been if the freshness of the first year of marriage was still retained.

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