

THE LOVE TEST

Rate your relationship's long-term potential with this quiz. We dare you!

#1 Are you in sync sexually?

LOVE TEST: On separate pieces of paper, write down three good and three bad sexual experiences you've had together. The key word here is "together" – the last thing you need to be talking about is the fantastic sex you had with an ex.

WHAT IT MEANS: Did you come up with the same answers or were they polar opposites? This exercise is a great way to test whether you're both enjoying the same things in bed. Having a healthy and mutually satisfying sex life is crucial to a lasting relationship. "I find that if a couple's relationship is lacking in the sex department, their intimacy levels drop, arguments creep in and eventually everything goes pear-shaped," says Jo-Anne Baker, sex therapist, founder of www.pleasurespot.com.au and author of *Riding The Sexual Frontier: All You Ever Wanted To Know About Men And Sex* (HarperCollins, \$22.95). "I use this technique a lot in my counselling sessions. Often, couples have a fantastic sack session but then forget all about the ingredients that went into making the sex so earth-shattering. Analysing what made the bad experiences so unpleasant can help couples to exclude these elements from their sex lives."

#2

Do you fight fair?

LOVE TEST: Act out your reaction to the following scenario. If either of you doesn't feel comfortable doing this, try writing it down.

HYPOTHETICAL: Your live-in boyfriend has promised to be home for dinner at 7pm. You've arranged a special meal but he doesn't arrive until 8pm, without so much as a phone call.

WHAT IT MEANS: The preferable reaction here is not to throw a massive hissy fit and chuck the now-cold spaghetti carbonara across the room. "The ability to resolve arguments is crucial to any relationship," says Dr John Barletta, relationship educator and senior lecturer of counselling

at the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane. "Couples who trust each other and can talk through their problems sensibly and calmly, as well as agreeing to disagree sometimes, are the ones who will still be together in five years. Research shows that 70 per cent of arguments go unresolved; couples who can deal with the issue at hand and avoid letting things fester and resurface are the real winners." The essential elements to help resolve life's little tiffs are taking time out when things get heated, saying sorry when you're wrong, maintaining physical contact (for example, holding hands) even when arguing, and being willing to compromise. Also, don't forget the make-up sex afterwards, it can be a great way to reconnect and rescue lost intimacy.

By Melissa Ironside

#3 Are you a good mental match?

LOVE TEST: On separate pieces of paper, fill in the following blanks.

- While living together, I would like to spend ____ hours per week together (excluding sleeping).
- I think that ____ arguments a week is healthy for our relationship.
- I believe we have ____ per cent of things in common.
- I want to see our families ____ times each month.
- I'd like to have sex ____ times a week.
- When we're apart, we should talk ____ times a day.

WHAT IT MEANS: How did your answers compare to each other's and how do they compare to what you're doing now? Research shows that opposites don't attract, so ideally your answers should be the same. "Couples whose relationships will stand the test of time should have answered: zero to the question about arguments, 20 or more to the one about hours spent together and 70 per cent or above to the question about things in common," notes Alicia Fortinberry, psychotherapist and co-author of *Creating Optimism: A Proven, Seven-Step Program For Overcoming Depression* (McGraw-Hill, available through www.amazon.com and www.upliftprogram.com).

#4

Are you interested in your partner's past?

LOVE TEST: Sit down together and, on separate pieces of paper, list your partner's top ten characteristics. These can be positive or negative. The trick is to put down the first thing you think of, whether it be honesty, forgetfulness or immaturity, so only give yourself 60 seconds. Do the same for your mother, your father or another significant person in your life.

WHAT IT MEANS: This test is a great indication as to which relationship pattern you're following, and whether it's a destructive or healthy one. "Often we tend to seek out relationships with people that are similar to those we have had in the past. This is especially the case with the more difficult ones," says Dr Bob Murray, **psychologist** and co-author of *Creating Optimism*. "It's generally not an encouraging sign if **you find** that your partner's qualities resemble those of a parent with whom you have had a **troubled** relationship." However, it doesn't necessarily spell doom. Discuss with your partner the **behaviour** that's bothering you and talk about how it could change. For example, "I don't feel that you praise me enough, it would be great if you could try to compliment me at least once a day." →