



The 3Ms and New Relationships

I'm a people magazine subscriber. I love it and my clients seem to love it too. Maybe it's just an upscale version of the Inquirer, but it is the most read magazine in my waiting area. Usually I recycle the old copies, but I've saved one as a tool to use in therapy sessions.

Romance is a common topic in my office. When I hear a client is about to do one of the 3M's early in a relationship (less than 6 months), I pull out my treasured copy of People. The headline reads "WHAT WENT WRONG". The picture on the cover is of Kenny Chesney and Renee Zellweger on their wedding day. You can tell from the picture they are madly in love. Yet the cover story is about their breakup. So what did go wrong? People magazine doesn't have a good answer, but I believe I do. The answer lies in the 3M's.

Moving, **m**arriage, and **m**oney are the offenders. In my years of practice, I have learned that when people move in together, get married, and/or merge their money within the first 6 months of dating it almost always heralds the beginning of the end for them. It's sad too. I believe some of these couples would have actually made it had they moved more slowly.

The first 6 months of dating should be fun and passionate. But the fun and passion need to happen in a safe environment. I love going to water parks! You can't beat the wave pool, water slide and, lazy river. When we go, we have fun and are revved up for the whole day. Most everyone there responds the same way. But the combination of water, waves, slides, concrete, and kids can be dangerous. To minimize trauma, the water park activities are watched closely by lots of life guards. They keep an eye on us and when we start to do something that can lead to injury; they stop us in no uncertain terms. As long as we are playing safely, they don't get in our way. But they let us know when we touch the line.

The 3Ms can operate like life guards in the early days of relationships. If you find yourself planning to move in together, get married or merge your money before you have known each other for 6 months, you need to hear the life guard's whistle blowing in your head. It's not telling you to break up. It's telling you to slow down. It's saying if any of these ideas are good ideas today, they will still be good ideas several months down the line.

The 3M whistle is telling you if you really love this person he or she is someone for whom slowing down will be worth it. If you don't want to join the ranks of Kenny and Renee, Britney Spears, Carmen Electra, Julia Roberts, and Lyle Lovett to name a few you'll just say no to the 3Ms during the first 6 months of your new relationship. Call it the "6 month rule". Have fun, be adventurous, enjoy the passion, and live it up in those early months. You may be making memories to last a lifetime.