

Choosing a partner. What are the rules of attraction?

by Dr Victoria Lukats MBBS MRCPsych MSc

We all know how it feels to be instantly attracted to someone. When forming a relationship, that kind of instinctive response is important for most people. It's naïve to think otherwise.

Yet people in long-term relationships rarely cite physical appearance when asked why their relationship is successful. More important is **compatibility**, based primarily upon **personality traits** – and that's the basis of **PARSHIP's [compatibility profiling test](#)**.

'Is this someone I find attractive? Do I want to get to know them better?'

This seemingly simple question is much more complex than it appears. It's certainly not just a matter of giving someone a score for their looks. For example, it is well known that we tend to go for people who match our own level of attractiveness. All of us appreciate physical beauty, but it seems that too much of it in a partner can make us feel jealous, threatened or insecure. Somehow, even in our early interactions, our unconscious mind sends us warnings about this.

Even in a relationship where one of the partners is exceptionally attractive, these tensions will not always arise. It will, however, generally be even more important for the relationship to be balanced in other ways: in other words, a relationship between two genuinely compatible people who both feel that their needs are being met.

More than skin deep

Physical attractiveness is not the only factor in determining attraction. Even before we speak to someone, we start to make lots of guesses about what they might be like as a person.

Different people notice different things first, but clothes and grooming create an impression – even if we don't realise it. We also tend to make initial assumptions (sometimes surprisingly biased and inaccurate) about someone else: their social background, what they might do for a living and even what sorts of opinions they might hold.

Making the connection

We can be attracted to people who are similar to ourselves, but again, it's not quite that simple. Similarities are important, but certain aspects of a potential partner's appearance, body language, mannerisms or personality can tap into our conscious and unconscious memories. They can trigger a deep emotional response.

For example, we've all met someone new who almost immediately felt like an old friend. This can be hard to explain ...*"It's as if we just clicked"*. One possible explanation is that something about this person reminds us of someone close to our heart: a parent, a sibling, our first love, an ex-partner or a really good friend. We may not even realise this consciously

Taking things further



Clearly the initial stages of attraction are based on numerous complex factors, and we have little conscious control over some of them. Ultimately, most people would say that face-to-face attraction is either there or it's not. It's up to us whether we continue to the next stage ... getting to know someone better and maybe even forming a relationship.

Do you have any questions that you would like to see discussed in future editions of the PARSHIP newsletter? Then [contact Dr Lukats*](#).

Dr Victoria Lukats MBBS MRCPsych MSc works as a psychiatrist.

If you want to meet the love of your life, visit www.parship.co.uk and take PARSHIP's free compatibility profiling test.

*Any reader questions that appear in the PARSHIP.co.uk newsletter will do so anonymously. Unfortunately, PARSHIP.co.uk and Dr Victoria Lukats cannot enter into personal correspondence on relationship issues raised by readers.

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