

Dating and Romance: The Problem With Kindness

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The Huffington Post:

Here's a simple and sad fact: A lot of people who are married, or in long-term relationships, are not very compatible. Partners disagree about very basic stuff, like religion and politics and values, or they simply don't find each other attractive. Just look at the divorce statistics.

This raises a knotty and important question. If choosing a partner is such an important life decision, why do so many of us get it wrong? Why does the reality of a relationship fail so often to match our ideals? Obviously there are a lot of little differences that emerge over time, and people do change, but it seems like we should at least get the fundamental issues straight.

Psychological scientists are very interested in this question, but most have focused on self-focused errors in romantic choice. That is, we choose romantic partners who are rich or beautiful or fertile or otherwise valuable, but these qualities may not always make for a deep and enduring relationship.

This reasoning also assumes that we simply reject any potential partner who doesn't match our ideals. But do we? A team of researchers at the University of Toronto is offering a radical new idea about why we make so many poor relationship choices: We're too nice. According to Samantha Joel and her colleagues, the human mind has strong and automatic prosocial tendencies — we don't like inflicting social pain — and this deep-rooted kindness keeps men and women from rejecting partners — even incompatible partners. What's more, we are unaware of our generosity's power. We think we will be picky about our romantic partners, but in reality, rejecting people is easier said than done.

Read the whole story: [*The Huffington Post*](#)

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