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Open Letter to My Son

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OPEN LETTER

to my son . . .

by

Jean McDirmid Hansen

Child Development
Instructor

Dear Wink:

It wasn't too long ago that your father and I hung over your crib. You had been giving us a particularly trying evening. At last you were soundly sleeping. I drew a long sigh of relief and said, "I can hardly wait till he can talk". Your father had put in a hard day on the road. He said, "I can hardly wait till he grows up and gets married."

Well, here we are. You are grown up and soon will be planning for a home of your own. I have always liked the girls you liked and somehow I have perfect confidence that any girl who wins your love will have mine, too, not just because she is the girl my son chose but in her own right. I have always taken great pride that you liked me as a person in addition to the love you gave me as your mother — in short, that we might have been very good friends even though we were not related by ties of blood. So I would like over and above the accidental "in law" relationship to be a dear friend of your wife.

A great deal has been written on the whom and when to marry. To me the when seems most important. It is my theory that if the when is right, the whom will automatically take care of itself. I do not mean when in terms of wages, electric refrigeration, maid service or what have you, but in terms of your own development.

This readiness involves many things. Your attitude toward life is one of them. Do you think the world owes you something? Do you say, "Why did this have to happen to me?" when things go wrong? Or do you say, "This is my life and it is going to be pretty much what I make it." Do you realize that we grow just as much, probably more, by adversity than by good fortune?

Young people make excessive demands upon marriage. Though they may pride themselves upon their realistic approach to life, in this they remain incorrigibly romantic. During the engagement when each is on best behavior they seldom see each other as they really are.

One of the great adjustments of marriage is that of accepting one another on the level of everyday living. When conflicts come, as they most certainly will, do not think marriage has failed. Conflicts are normal and must be used to build marriage constructively. Just don't let the conflagration spread till it takes in the past, present, and future. And remember that constructive conflict attacks problems; destructive conflict attacks personality.

There is a bad time for conflict and of course that is just the time it is most apt to occur. One of you may be hitting a new "low" or it may just be the wrong time of the month for your wife. I was years discovering that there was a relation between the date checked on the calendar and the time I chose to feel ill-used and declare my rights. If you recognize these factors you may avert the mistake of trying to reach a decision when you are not up to par. A few sym-

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pathetic words at a time like this may be more convincing than the most valid of arguments. Don't be afraid to admit you are wrong if you see that reason is on the other side. When the time is ripe, reach a decision, act upon it as speedily as possible and then forget it permanently. These things are easier said than done, but these few insights may help you to see the situation clearly.

There is no standard pattern for marriage. Each marriage is unique. It has been said that you must cut your pattern to fit yourself and the person you choose to marry and make the marriage of the materials each of you bring. A strong biological urge usually brings young people together but Mother Nature seems not to concern herself much after she has accomplished this end. The rest is up to you. . . . It is most important, this sexual adjustment, for though it is just a part of marriage, to be sure, if the sexual adjustment is attained, the other adjustments are more readily made and if it is not made, the effects are felt in all the other areas of marriage. Do not expect this adjustment to miraculously happen just because you love each other so dearly. Here are two separate individuals with different backgrounds, different amounts and kinds of sex education, possibly different inhibitions, different sex needs at different times. It takes patience and loving understanding to establish this relationship but an infinite amount of patience seems worthwhile when from some twenty odd years of marriage you can look back without nostalgia and say, "This is the best year of all."

Your new home will be different from the one you will be leaving. That is good. I am sure you see the unfairness of expecting a young wife to start out where your mother left off after twenty some years of experience, so you won't be making any unfavorable comparisons. Your father and I do not feel that you owe us anything. You have more than repaid any worry or care just by being yourself. Your allegiance will be to your new home. I dare to make such statements because I know that the love and understanding that exist between us defy the limitation of time and space.

You are a man. Truly "my cup runneth over".
My love goes with you always,
Your Mother



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