

Made for each other?

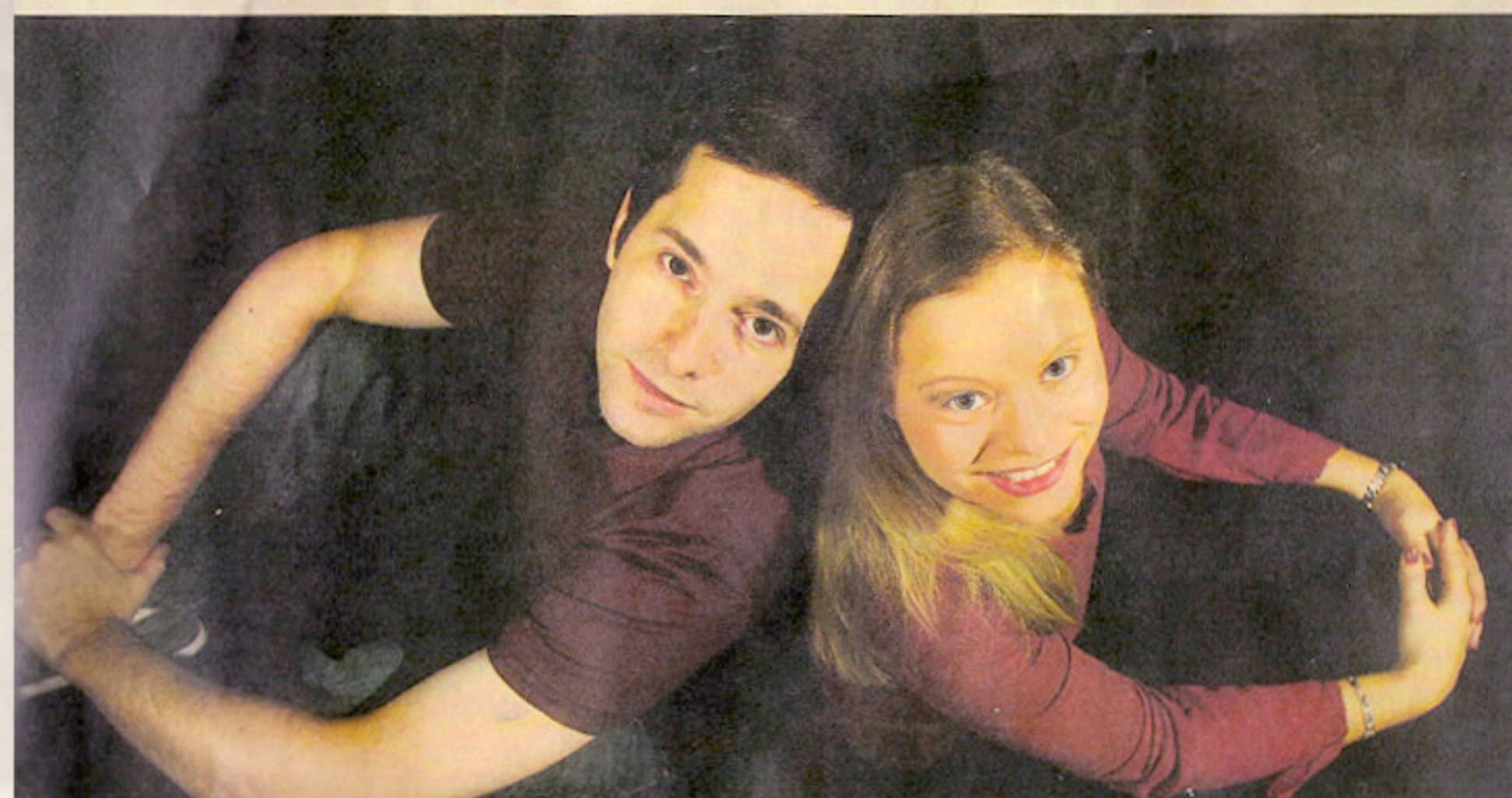
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Weighing the value of compatibility tests

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STAFF WRITER

"Are you dating a mirror? You and your mate are perfectly compatible!"

So came the computer-generated comments from planetpsych.com after Fairview newlyweds Adrienne and Doug Kelly completed its online compatibility quiz.

Good thing the Kellys took the quiz only for laughs. Because they thought it was ridiculous.

"Mirror image? We're so *not*," said Adrienne.

In fact, the Jung Marriage Test they took at humanmetrics.com indicated the two are wildly dissimilar, leading to an "unsatisfactory" match index.

Adrienne's an extrovert; Doug's an introvert, the survey revealed. She's perceptive; he's judgmental. Makes you wonder why they ever got together.

It also makes you wonder if there's any value in compatibility tests.

"If we were wondering if we should go forward and get married, these tests wouldn't tell us," said Doug, who tied the knot with Adrienne in August. "Gut instincts tell you more."

Though quizzes can be fun, some professionals say they offer little more than entertainment.

"There are so many ways they fall short of understanding the depth of a relationship," said Dr. Moti Peleg, director of the Psychological Group of New Jersey in Ridgewood. "They don't address things

like authenticity, compassion and humbleness that are in the soul of the relationship."

Some of the quizzes are nothing more than horoscope reports, or focus solely on one issue, such as finances.

Others rely on general true-false questions about musical preferences and religious practices.

On a quiz for married couples offered at divorcenet.com, you lose points for not rating your spouse on issues that may be irrelevant (for instance, "Treats kids from former marriage well").

Alain Espinosa of Nutley and Emily Johnson of West Orange — who are attending premarital classes with their pastor and his wife ahead of their

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Compatibility: Tests may not tell couples the whole story

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planned engagement — felt the online surveys were one-dimensional.

"Emily and I scored differently and by some standards we are not compatible," said Espinosa. However, they view their dissimilarities positively. "Our differences are what make the relationship interesting and promote growth in each other."

He added that he and Johnson did score well on questions of shared values. "It makes me wonder if the majority of people that take these surveys are aware that ... compatibility is more based on core values than personalities," he said.

Some of the better quizzes could get potential mates talking about key practical concerns, said social psychologist Marci

differences don't matter."

Joyce Artinian of wedalbert.com, a Hackensack-based wedding planning site, said a recent survey of newlywed users confirmed the usefulness of premarital counseling such as the

Catholic Pre-Cana program.

"[Respondents said] it got things out on the table so there weren't as many surprises when they got married," Artinian related.

According to an article

reprinted on the site by marriage-prep workshop directors Patty and Greg Kuhlman, a good program should address compatibility, but it also should explore expectations, personalities, families of origin, communica-

tion, conflict resolution, intimacy/sexuality and long-term goals. In their admittedly amateur opinion, the Kellys suggest a simpler method for predicting the success of a budding relationship.

"Make sure your friends like the person," Adrienne advised. "Go to lunch with your partner's best friend. You need that third person to say you're not crazy."

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DR. MOTI PELEG

Gleason, formerly of Bayonne.

"If the tests show differences of opinion on savings, for example, you might want to see if that's a deal-breaker for you," she said.

Relationship expert Michael Webb offers a publication called "1,000 Questions for Couples" at theromantic.com to help couples uncover issues like past criminal activity and unrevealed illnesses.

"There are important questions that most people don't even think of asking but are absolutely necessary if you want to have a happy relationship," he said.

Gleason stressed that although people with similar personality traits are more likely to end up together, similar backgrounds are a larger factor in a marriage's chances for success.

"If a quiz shows you have 50 percent compatibility, that doesn't mean you shouldn't get married," she stressed.

After Adrienne and Doug had been dating more than three years, she consulted a psychic for pointers on marrying a guy who was clearly not her mirror image.

"She didn't predict anything but she told me that based on his cards, Doug's a free spirit so I shouldn't push things or make decisions for him or tie him down," said Adrienne. She has found the advice to be worthwhile.

A second-time newlywed himself, Peleg urges couples to go for premarital counseling or workshops designed to help foster healthier interactions and banish egotistical or narcissistic tendencies.

He and his wife, Ronit, do spiritual counseling sessions based on a group communication approach espoused by social psychologist Jack M. Zimmerman.

"If you think you've met your mate, delay the wedding and go for six months of counseling to focus on communication skills to sustain the relationship and help it flourish," Peleg said.