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## I was fine with my partner being anti-marriage – but now we’ve had a baby I’ve changed my mind

COUPLE'S THERAPY

In this week's Couple Therapy dilemma, couple's counsellor Cate Mackenzie advises on a difference of opinion on marriage



I had an insecure childhood and it's important to me that we are a stable unit for my child (Photo: Jamie Grill/Getty Images)



By **i Team**

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*Each week **i** asks experts to answer readers' questions about love, sex and relationships.*

I am 36 and have been with my partner for six years. He is the love of my life and I want to spend the rest of my life with him. We have our issues but fundamentally things are good and we have a beautiful baby girl together.



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I had an insecure childhood and it's important to me that we are a stable unit for my child. He says it's just a piece of paper and that he isn't going anywhere, which I believe. But it hurts me that he doesn't seem to care about how important it is to me. I keep thinking that if he really loved me he would do this for me.

Sometimes it makes me so upset that I worry that it will ruin our relationship. Am I old-fashioned to think so highly of marriage? Or to think that it matters so much? Or should I let it go because our relationship is so strong in other ways? He is a good man and we compromise in loads of areas, this is just one thing we seem to be stuck on. I want to get past it but I don't know if I can.

### Couples counsellor and psychosexual therapist **Cate Mackenzie** says:

First of all, please know that it's really normal to want commitment and love, especially when you have a child. Your feelings are justified. You also see that you are with a good man and have a loving family, even without the marriage. Congratulations on that – some people wait for marriage and miss out on having a child. You do not have to feel the same about this issue.

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It probably makes sense that he is not as worried about marriage as he has been there and done that and also he may have felt burnt by his divorce or separation. He may well feel happy and involved and in love with you but may not feel the need for marriage.

In traditional heterosexual relationships often the man may wish for love and respect and the woman may wish for safety and security. This is not the same for everyone of course, but if it's true here, it may mean that if he feels loved and respected by you he may not see the same need for the safety and security you wish for.



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Then, I would explore how you might start to think of creating some of this without marriage to start with. For example, if this is about a ceremony with friends, would you or he be open to a party to celebrate your relationship? If it is about money and housing could you have some agreements or ways to make you feel safe? If you can break problems down you can steal their power and get to what's really important.

Once you've thought and talked about it with someone else, can you then have an open chat with him without expectations of how that conversation will go. Ideally, you would set up a situation where you both have time to speak and the other repeats back what they have heard. This way you both get time to speak and to be heard.

Pushing someone into marriage really can have terrible setbacks for a relationship but sharing why he means so much to you, how you see the relationship as your forever one and how you would really feel great (and secure and safe) about having the commitment of marriage can allow someone to understand you so much more and maybe come round to it.

The main thing here is to honour and accept his position while also being really honest about your feelings. This is pretty vulnerable and it may not have the answers you want immediately but he sounds like a great guy and I imagine he will think about this. Life is mysterious and the journey of the heart is so precious.

Whether they lead to marriage or not, these conversations will allow you to understand each other more and may lead to deeper intimacy. The path of a committed relationship is one of daring to stir the pot and open up difficult conversations and also appreciate and accept what you have. Good luck!

As told to Marianne Power 

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