You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes…

We all have certain expectations when it comes to finding a partner and these expectations have grown over time. There was a time that marriage was more of a business relationship between two people who needed each other. Women needed a provider and men needed someone to bear children. If love was part of the equation, this was a bonus. Today, we expect our partners to be our lovers and our best friends; to have the same interests and life styles; and to have the same values and worldview. This is a lofty expectation and the reality is, we may not get everything we *want*. However, everyone should expect to get what one *needs* the most. Two people are naturally going to have differences in terms of how they like to spend their time, how they parent, how they spend their money, etc. It would be impossible to find someone who is just like you in all those areas. I think that what we really *need* are three basic things from our partners. And, if we get these three things, all the other differences can be worked out. These three things are kindness, respect and affection. I am leaving out attraction because it is assumed that without a physical attraction, the relationship would not have gone much beyond the first date. Kindness is necessary because it is the basis for thoughtful acts and efforts to please the other person. Without kindness, a person will feel taken for granted and undervalued. Respect is necessary because without it, we would not value the other person’s opinion. This would make it difficult to find compromises and would lead to power imbalances in relationships and standoffs in communication. Finally, affection is key because affection is what will help a couple “recover” and get back to being friends even after a conflict. All couples have conflicts and disagreements. However, if we have affection for one another, we are able to let things go. It’s hard to hold a grudge against someone for whom we feel great affection. If we treat each other with kindness, have respect for the other person and maintain affection, all the other little or big differences can be resolved. Whether it’s how to spend money or how to divide up household responsibilities, if we treat each other kindly and with respect, we can work these issues out. And, if we have some periodic arguments about these things, affection will lead us back toward each other. Don’t expect to get everything you *want* from a partner, but if you chose carefully, you can get what you *need.*