

# Ditch that Love checklist

It helps to keep an open mind and give love a chance to bloom. Just ask Fan Tang Meng and Joanna Fan who attest that love can grow with time. by JULIA WANG



*Soon-to-be-wedded couple Fan Tang Meng and Joanna Fan*

If Joanna Fan, 28, had gone with her initial instincts, she probably wouldn't be in the midst of her wedding preparations today. On her first encounter with husband-to-be Fan Tang Meng, 30, in an online chatroom on SDN's Lovebyte website in early 2010, she brushed him off.

"I wasn't interested to chat with Tang Meng at first," she reveals. "After all, Chinese tradition dictates that it's not good to get together with someone who has the same surname as you."

Luckily for the couple, Tang Meng persisted. "Perhaps I found her all the more intriguing. I wasn't put off and redoubled my efforts to talk to her," he says with a laugh. Eventually Joanna relented and the pair soon added each other on MSN and started chatting on a regular basis.

## NOT LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Their first date was at the Singapore Zoo. "I met Tang Meng along with my sister and another male friend," recalls Joanna, an engineer. Joanna's friend immediately sensed that Tang Meng was interested in her, but Joanna herself was not particularly bowled over by him. "I'm quite cautious and practical by nature," says Joanna. "I'm not the sort who just jumps into things without knowing what I'm getting into."

It took several more dates before Tang Meng, a systems administrator, won her heart. Besides being patient and giving Joanna the space she needed to consider the budding relationship, Tang Meng always made the effort to accompany Joanna to her home in Tampines at the end of

every date, despite living in Boon Lay. It was this chivalry and gentlemanly behaviour that eventually won Joanna over.

## CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES

The couple believe that differences don't necessarily have to lead to acrimony. "Before you meet someone, you tend to have this long checklist of qualities she should have," says Tang Meng. "But when you finally meet her, you might throw away that list because the relationship just feels right for you!"

Joanna agrees, and says, "Tang Meng has taught me that it's the little things a person does for the other in a relationship that count. All these add up to something quite substantial."

Despite their different personalities, the couple are thankful



that they haven't had a major disagreement in the time they've been together. "The trick is to choose your battles. Why nitpick over small things that won't matter in the long run?" muses Tang Meng.

### THREE PROPOSALS

The couple will hold their wedding this November. However, the road to getting his bride was a bumpy one for Tang Meng. "I proposed to her three times!" he reveals with a chuckle. "On the first two occasions, she told me she wasn't ready. But I knew she was the person I wanted to be with, so I was willing to wait for as long as it took."

It was third time lucky for Tang Meng when he popped the question again on their first Valentine's Day celebration this year. "We had dinner on the eve of Valentine's Day, as he had to go for reservist the next day. After dinner, we took a stroll at the Chinese Garden — and that's when he brandished a ring box," recalls Joanna.

Tang Meng adds: "I asked her if she wanted me to get down on one knee as the ground was muddy because it had rained. Fortunately she told me it wasn't necessary." Joanna said "yes" at the stroke of midnight.

His advice for those who have yet to find their soulmate? "Keep an open mind when striking up friendships. Don't be too obsessed with finding the 'perfect' partner."

"Having a set criteria for your ideal partner limits your choices. Meeting and being with someone different has broadened my dating experiences and made for a more interesting relationship. What's more important is having mutual respect and understanding."

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