



## Love In The City

**The List: What is the most important factor in maintaining a long-term relationship?**

**Toby Jones:** Lots of money! No, personally, I think the most important element is friendship. If you look at people's parents, it all boils down to the fact that your perfect partner should also be your best friend.

**Pia Muggenah:** Be honest with yourself and with the other person about what is important to you and what you want. A lot of people settle and adapt too much to the other person. Of course, there is always the need for give and take in a relationship but you have to work out what is non-negotiable to you in a relationship.

**Richard Gee:** I think there are two elements: have respect for each other and focus on the solution, not the problem. Life throws an endless

series of problems at every relationship and you need to focus on each other, keep building the relationship, and work on the problems together – side-by-side, not head-to-head.

**The List: How do you keep the romance alive?**

**Toby:** I don't think it's all about going out for candle-lit dinners, I think it's about unconditionally doing something for someone like making breakfast in bed for each other or going to the airport to pick someone up. I think it's these selfless gestures that keep the romance alive.

**Richard:** Be romantic. Be inventive. Inspire your partner. Take chances. Make the first move, don't wait for them. Have a Valentine's Day once a month. Once a week even.

**Pia:** Schedule romance. I know that sounds really



bad but if you look at people in Hong Kong and how many hours we work, it makes sense for couples to schedule time to just be with each other.

**The List:** Does there come a time when you can just relax in a relationship or do you have to keep making an effort?

**Ivvy:** I think there comes a time when you can just be best mates and enjoy doing nothing together.

**Pia:** It's a bit like brushing your teeth – you don't think about making an effort, you just do it automatically, it's just part of you. I'm not saying that relationships should become mechanical, but if you make a point of thinking about what you can do to make your relationship better – it soon becomes habit.

**Richard:** The real killer is taking things for granted. Make the choice to commit to your partner, and then invest your life and love and spirit into the relationship. Consider everyday what you can do to show your love.

**The List:** There are many self-help guides to relationships. How useful are these books?

**Foby:** They're all bollocks. All these self-help books are there to make money, they play on people's weaknesses. I think you'll get much better advice on a night out with your mates. I suppose books might help you get your head together in a relationship, but it just boils down to you being yourself and being open and honest.

**Pia:** We've lived many thousands of years without books and guides but then again we are now stuck in this environment where we are not living naturally anymore. I really think we're in a time where people are asking questions and these books are great tools to help people understand themselves and others.

**Richard:** Guides are good signposts, they can help us to understand each other and explain some of those weird idiosyncrasies. But every relationship is unique, and every couple has to figure out their own way to make it work and last.

**The List:** Do you think the fast-paced lifestyle in Hong Kong makes it difficult to maintain relationships?

**Toby:** London is equally as bad. I think it all comes back to friendship again. If you have a strong basis, you can weather anything. If there are problems, there are problems – you can't blame a fast-paced lifestyle, you need to look at why you're not happy and address it.

**Pho:** A lot of people come to Hong Kong for a short time to enhance their career and make a lot of money. They get in quick and get out quick and therefore, it's not an environment that necessarily encourages anything long-term in your life.

**Richard:** Wow, yes, every-

thing gets magnified and intensified. Successful couples are so often going in different directions, at different speeds. I see lots of couples that have just drifted, each in their way, without even realizing it, and simply lost the connection, it's important to make the space and time to re-connect every day.

**The List:** What is the best way for singles to meet in Hong Kong without having to hit Lan Kwai Fong every Saturday night?

**Toby:** I may be biased but internet dating and speed dating are great ways to meet people. I've

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certainly noticed a trend for much younger, trendier people using online dating. On our

London site, we even have a very popular student following. Sports clubs are also a great way of meeting new people.

**Pia:** More than anything, Hong Kong is a place for very committed friendships – friends are like family. So if you want to meet someone, let your friends know and get them in on the hunt.

**The List:** Many people are scared of internet dating or singles' nights and fear they will be full of weirdos. Is this a good way to meet people?

**Toby:** Of course you are going to meet weirdos wherever you are, you just need to walk down Lan Kwai Fong to realize that. With internet dating, you are going you are going to meet people who are committed to finding a relationship, that

doesn't necessarily make them weirdos.

**Pia:** I've tried both and it's not for everyone. But it's like with anything, first of all you need to work out what you want and then you need to try different strategies to reach your goal. Internet dating is just one of those strategies and it's good to keep an open mind about it.

**Richard:** Weirdos are people too, remember?

We're always going to meet people who don't suit us, whether they're just wacko or seriously abusive, it's just about how we manage that situation when we come across it.

**The List:** What tips do you have for a successful first date?

**Pia:** Look at it as a fun experience and don't put

too much expectation on the first date – it's really just window-shopping. Keep it short and sweet and be curious about the other person.

Richard: It depends on what "success" is for you. For something long term, be real. Put your cards on the table. First impressions define the relationship and fake niceness on the first date has the potential to come back and bite you.

Toby: I remember reading an internet survey years ago, where they'd questioned people from different dating sites about what worked and what didn't on a first date. The most important element to most people was a good sense of humor and the biggest turn off was bad manners. ■

