

(P = Presenter; J = Julie; B = Bryan)

P: Now in this special programme on the state of marriage in Britain today, we ask two people about their experiences and views on the topic, Julie Sanders and Bryan Simpson. Now, you're both married – not to each other, I hasten to add! – so perhaps I should start by asking you both 'Why?', given that in this country over one in three marriages ends in divorce. Julie?

J: Well, I'd been living with Peter for just over a year – in fact, we'd recently celebrated our first anniversary in the flat – when suddenly, one evening, he got down on one knee and asked me to marry him. It was so romantic – I didn't have the heart to turn him down! No, but of course, we'd spoken about it before and we both agreed it was the right thing to do – a natural stage in our relationship and a way of making it official. And of course, our parents were delighted!

P: Was it a church wedding?

J: Oh yes, the whole works. I'd always dreamed of having a wedding dress and walking down the aisle. We had nearly 300 guests – it was all very lavish. Peter didn't share my enthusiasm at first – particularly when he thought of the cost of it all – but as the big day got nearer he worried less about the money and more about making sure it'd be the best day of our lives.

P: And you Bryan? You've done it twice, haven't you? Did you know that you are twice as likely to get divorced if you and your partner have done so already?

B: It doesn't sound too good, does it? But anyway, Chrissie – my current wife – and I got married more for the tax advantages than any need to make a public statement or keep our parents happy. At the time there were a whole load of benefits and allowances for married couples which we wouldn't have had access to if we'd just lived together. So it was just a quick registry office job for us – much cheaper and less fuss.

P: What about love? Didn't that come into it at all?

B: Oh yes, of course, but only in the sense that Chrissie was the sort of person I knew I could grow to love more, rather than someone I was

besotted with and who'd end up disappointing me. There wasn't a great deal of passion in our romance but we do have a good marriage based on mutual respect and we still enjoy each other's company.

P: That's good to hear. Julie, you've been married for just six months now. How is your marriage working out? Has it changed your relationship?

J: Um, well, it's a little early to say, yet. We're still very much in the honeymoon period, I suppose. But it's not all domestic bliss – I notice that we do argue more than before, but it's usually about trivial things, so it's over and done with in about half an hour. So far we haven't had any fights over major issues – we haven't been throwing plates at each other, or anything like that.

P: Have you ever reached that stage in your marriage, Bryan?

B: Well I haven't, but I'm not sure how close Chrissie's come to it... No, but there have been some difficult times. Having my own business put a tremendous strain on my first marriage – having to work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week doesn't do much for a relationship. So I sold the business soon after I married Chrissie. Now our 'major issue', as Julie describes it, has been the children. With two it was fine, but three proved to be something of a crowd – at least until we got over the nappies and bottle stage. Now we don't feel quite so restricted by it all – we're not tired and irritable all the time.

P: And how do you both see the future? The average marriage lasts just over 10 years. Will you both last that long?

J: I sincerely hope so – we've just taken out a 25-year mortgage! No, I do feel very positive about the future. I can see the two of us being retired together. There'll be bad times, I know, but you've just got to work at it and be truthful with each other. Getting divorced is the easy way out – the hard bit is to stick at it and work through the problems.

P: Bryan?

B: Ask me in three years' time. There's just nothing certain about the future – least of all in this marriage business.

P: Julie, Bryan, thank you for coming in. After the break we'll hear from Marriage Guidance Counsellor, Margie Freeburn, who'll...