

Navigate those wedlock woes

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Blame it on fairytales or Hollywood movies, but many couples have a belief that their marriage will be 100 per cent perfect, day in and day out.

When reality strikes some time after the honeymoon, it can be a real shock for one or both partners, and that is when conflicts arise and can seem insurmountable.

As Jill Henry, from the Eastern Suburbs Counselling Service, said: "Some people expect that their relationship will be exciting, endlessly stimulating, glamorous and perfect all of the time.

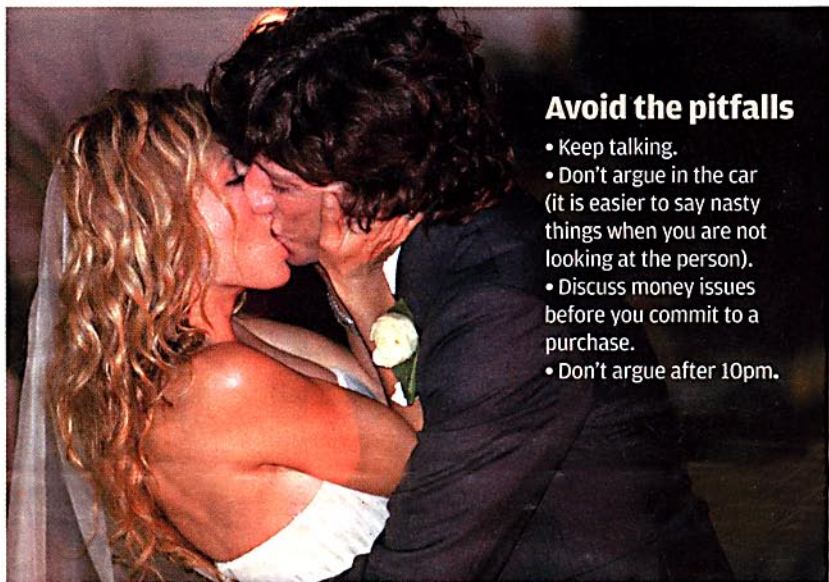
"That is simply an unrealistic expectation, just as it is to expect that your partner will make you feel happy all the time.

"In reality, relationships are pulsating – you come together and you come apart. But people are not trained for the 'push and pull' of this and the fact it is normal sometimes to have mixed feelings about your partner."

Ms Henry said the Bondi Junction-based practice started pre-marriage counselling sessions in response to the need in the community. It applies to all ages, first and subsequent marriages.

"We live in a society that is made for obsolescence. If something is not working anymore, we tend to throw it away and get a new one and some people feel that way about their relationships."

She recommended couples do the pre-marriage check months before the wedding plans start to add stress to the situation. "If it emerges that the rela-



Avoid the pitfalls

- Keep talking.
- Don't argue in the car (it is easier to say nasty things when you are not looking at the person).
- Discuss money issues before you commit to a purchase.
- Don't argue after 10pm.

It's all rosy at the start but some couples are ill equipped to deal with life after the honeymoon. Photo: AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo

tionship is not going to work, then it is better to know it then and not proceed through marriage and into divorce."

Ms Henry said that often the first time a problem with the relationship was aired was in the counselling room.

"The more personal awareness there is, the greater your capacity to relate. By working through it, the couple comes out richer, and the relationship moves to another level."

Relationships Australia (NSW) CEO Anne Hollonds said counselling was a vital part of marriage preparation.

"If you were setting up a business partnership, you would get advice, do

a business plan to identify your future goals and the roles of each partner. You would also have a review process to see how the business was going," she said.

"What affects your quality of life most is the quality of your marriage. Yet people do not see it as an investment because they have an idealistic view of falling in love."

She stressed that partnership building was a vital part of marriage. "It doesn't matter what age you are, if you have not done it before you got married, it is never too late to invest in strengthening the partnership."