



Are arranged marriages the secret to a happy relationship?

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By [Brette Sember](#)

Imagine marrying a stranger—someone unknown to you until the night before your wedding. As foreign as that concept might sound to Western ears, it's far from abnormal in many cultures around the world. And thankfully, the fiancé is usually picked by a trusted source—one's parents (though to some, that may sound like one of the *least* trustworthy options).

While the idea of arranged marriages may make Americans uncomfortable, the statistics aren't so unfavorable: worldwide, arranged marriages account for 53% of all marriages. Of these, only 6.3% end in divorce. In India, where 88.4% of marriages are arranged, there is a miniscule 1.2% divorce rate. Compare this to the overall 40-50% divorce rate in the United States, and the contrast is starkly apparent.

Do arranged marriages actually work? Or does the disparity result from other cultural factors?

Arranged marriage in the United States

To some Americans, arranged marriages seem like a relic from some backwards past. But in fact,

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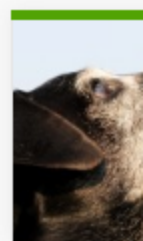
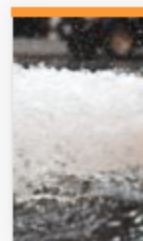
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arranged marriages are becoming increasingly common here, as a natural product of cultural diffusion. Indeed, immigrants to the United States are bringing traditions with them. 74% of young Indian-Americans say that they would prefer an arranged marriage.

And it's not just folks of Indian descent subscribing to this concept. A recent rash of reality TV shows—including *Married at First Sight*, *Arranged*, and *Married by Mom and Dad*—focus on making permanent matches between total strangers.

What are the advantages?

The general assumption is that most Americans would feel at odds with an arranged marriage. According to a 2016 Avvo study, however, one in four Americans (25%) would actually be interested in a professionally-arranged *relationship*. Is this such a far cry from a marriage? According to noted sociologist and renowned sexologist Pepper Schwartz:

A large number of men and women are open to being matched by a match-maker. This is a comment on how hard it is to find a mate in today's society—and how frustrated modern daters have become. People who have been successful at putting together a long term relationship for themselves haven't lost confidence in their own ability to find someone. But for people who have had only had short-term relationships, or an important relationship that self-combusted, then a matchmaker starts looking better and better.

Schwartz's comment about arranged romances applies to arranged marriages as well. An arranged marriage takes the burden of finding a mate out of the hands of each individual. They simply get to show up and trust that their family has done right by them.

Theoretically, an arranged marriage also alleviates the crushing existential questions that couples face, like: "Do we really love each other?" or "Have I made a good decision?" When others coordinate your marriage, they can objectively consider your compatibility with another based on belief system, way of life, goals, and personality. They can then make a measured decision on your behalf. It's all too easy to overlook these factors—in favor of more superficial characteristics—when choosing your own mate.

What are the drawbacks?

Many critics cite a lack of freedom as the biggest drawback of an arranged marriage. It's true that, in some countries, children are sometimes obligated to have an "arranged marriage". In Bangladesh, for example, 27% of girls under 15 are forced into marriage.

Also, if the marriage is arranged by both sets of parents, it's likely those parents will continue to be heavily involved in the household decisions, which could create drama for the couple. It's truly difficult to examine such drawbacks from an American point-of-view, however, as there are immense cultural variances at play. From another perspective, it may be considered lucky to



immense cultural variances at play. From another perspective, it may be considered lucky to have the wisdom of parents at your disposal.

Why are arranged marriages successful?

Opinions vary as to why the divorce rate is so much lower for arranged marriages. Certainly, in cultures that participate in the practice, there are cultural taboos in place around divorce that just don't exist in America. Unhappy couples may have little choice but to remain together. Contrarily, in the United States, you can literally [file for divorce online](#).

But arguably, an arranged marriage alleviates the pressure to be in love—and remain in love—*all the time*. Marriage is a long road that may include months or even years of feeling distant from your spouse. With less anxiety around emotion, many folks in arranged marriages actually do report feeling true love for their spouse. Also, instead of second guessing your own choice, you feel reassured that those you trust made a good choice on your behalf.

Although arranged marriages are not for everyone, it appears that the practice has more benefits than most Americans might initially consider. This raises the question, as immigrant families become further integrated into American society, will arranged marriage become more common?

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About Brette Sember

[Brette Sember](#) is a former attorney and author of more than 40 books, including *The Divorce Organizer & Planner*, *The Complete Divorce*, *How to Parent with Your Ex*, *The Essential Supervisor's Handbook*, *The Complete Credit Repair Kit*, *The Original Muffin Tin Cookbook*, and *The Gluten-Free Guide to Travel*. She writes often about law, parenting, food, travel, health, and more. She blogs at [PuttingItAllOnTheTable.com](#).

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