

Expert cautions reality television love might not be so real

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While millions of people tune in every week to watch love unfold on reality television shows such as "The Bachelor," one Baylor College of Medicine expert cautions that these reality television relationships may not be as real as they seem.

"Reality television love shows are about the visuals and not so much about two people getting to know each other in an intimate way – at least that doesn't come across as much," said Dr. James Bray, associate professor of family and community medicine at Baylor and family psychologist. "Long-term success in a relationship is about building trust, intimacy and closeness."

Bray adds that while [reality television](#) love shows are entertaining, they do not always accurately portray the relationship building process.

"They provide good entertainment but do not show a very realistic forming of relationships," Bray said. "When you have beautiful people being able to do really cool things, it can be exciting to watch. There's drama, almost like a real soap opera. Also, people can sometimes identify with somebody on these shows and then become invested in how they're doing, which is one of the reasons why I think these shows continue to be so successful."

Bray cautions that with cameras following contestants constantly, it puts pressure on them to look their best and act their best at all times.

"If you've really been protecting your negative traits to put out only a positive image, your partner or spouse is going to eventually learn about them and they may be very shocked," Bray said. "You get the good and the bad when you are in a relationship, and especially when you get married."

For couples interested in bettering their relationship or who are considering tying the knot, Bray recommends they switch off the television and instead check out helpful resources that can teach them how to build strong relationships.

"As somebody who studies families and relationships, there are really good resources out there for people who are thinking about getting married and good scientifically based programs that help people learn how to develop happy and healthy relationships," Bray said. "They can be quite helpful for people to develop realistic expectations and to really understand what they're getting themselves into. This can be very powerful for couples."

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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