

SPOUSE CALLS

Classic TV couples get a shot of expert relationship advice

IF YOU THINK MAINTAINING your relationship is tough, try having one on TV.

For even the most dedicated TV twosome, life together means one almost-guaranteed disagreement for each of 23 weeks per year, exacerbated by an omnipresent in-law or inevitable wacky neighbor. Luckily, almost no conflict becomes so huge that it can't be solved within, say, 22 minutes or so. Still, in honor of Valentine's Day, *Watch!* consulted Purdue University psychotherapist and pop culture commentator Dr. Will Miller for his prescription for what ails seven of our favorite small-screen pairings. — *Jim Colucci*



**Stefan Salvatore
and Elena Gilbert,**
The Vampire Diaries
(2009–)

**THE VAMPIRE
DIARIES**

airs Thursdays
at 8 p.m. ET/PT
on The CW.

THE ISSUE: Age difference. She's 16. He's 162. Can true love survive between May and December—of 1864?

THE PROGNOSIS: I'd talk about the risks in their future: You're in love and it's great now, but what's likely to come up down the road? Stefan, you're not going to die, and Elena, you are. Be on guard that this may come up, and when it does you need to be prepared. There is an advantage to this age difference: He has a century's worth of wisdom. So I actually have the most hope for this relationship.

BOB MAHONEY/THE CW



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Ricky and Lucy Ricardo
I Love Lucy
(1951-57)

THE ISSUE: Trust. Lucy feels that Ricky isn't helping her get into showbiz, while Ricky can't leave his wife alone for half an hour without her hatching a disastrous, backfiring plan.

THE PROGNOSIS: Lucy has great talent but is trapped in a male-dominated culture and schemes because she doesn't trust that Ricky has her aspirations at heart. On the plus side, the Ricardos seem to have enough mutual trust to know that no matter what happens, neither of them is going to leave. Ricky should let Lucy get into community theater. She'll succeed or she'll fail, but either way she'll be happy.



Ralph and Alice Kramden
The Honeymooners
(1955-56)

THE ISSUE: Money problems. Ralph squanders the couple's meager resources on get-rich-quick schemes without obtaining approval from Alice, who feels trapped at home in a tiny apartment.

THE PROGNOSIS: In the 1950s it was unusual to live without extended family nearby, such as in-laws who'd tell Ralph to knock it off. Ralph and Alice need a surrogate parental figure who could show Ralph how to deal with his anger and frustrations and to start enjoying the life he has. Because if Ralph doesn't start paying attention to his wife and her needs, he's going to lose her.



George and Louise Jefferson
The Jeffersons (1975-85)

THE ISSUE: Difference in temperament. George's hotheaded tirades embarrass Louise. Throw in a sassy maid, an enabling mother-in-law and a righteous mixed-race neighbor couple, and there's bound to be trouble in that de-luxe apartment in the sky.

THE PROGNOSIS: George sees his self-worth through the prism of material wealth, while Louise has a more evolved sense of what matters. As a victim of discrimination, George is right to be angry, but his expressions of that anger are pulling him away from his spouse. He would benefit from being around other successful black men who handle their stature with more grace.



Ray and Debra Barone
Everybody Loves Raymond
(1996-2005)

THE ISSUE: Time. Between raising children and fending off in-laws who pop in from across the street, Ray and Debra rarely have time to bond as a couple.

THE PROGNOSIS: Ray has not fully separated from his parents and needs to set boundaries with them. Then he and Debra can rekindle their sense of mission: They love each other, they have great kids and they have a job to do raising them. In therapy, we call it reframing: They may not be able to change their situation, but they *can* change the way they're looking at it.



Doug and Carrie Heffernan
The King of Queens (1998-2007)

THE ISSUE: Control. Will Type-A Carrie be able to change blue-collar Doug into a thoughtful mate, or will Doug get her to chuck her aspirations and join him for a life of sloth?

THE PROGNOSIS: Carrie must accept that, to the degree that Doug is capable of changing, she's going about it the wrong way. And Doug must recognize his selfishness and immaturity. When conflicts arise, emotion turns the fight into a battle of wills. I would help them map out the areas they fight about and where they can compromise.



Adam Rhodes and Jennifer Morgan
Rules of Engagement (2007-)

THE ISSUE: Lack of maturity. Adam is happy to be engaged to Jennifer but seems happiest when hanging out with the guys. Plus, perennial bachelor playboy Russell makes the single life seem awfully tempting.

THE PROGNOSIS: Adam and Jennifer seem like kindred spirits; both look for someone to take care of them. They should hold off a while before marriage because their identities could be shaped as they grow into each other. And even Russell can be of use, because you see what he's doing? Do the opposite.