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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ PSYCHOLOGY

The Couple's Macth Book: Lighting, Rekindling, or Extinguishing the Flame

Daniel Eckstein
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Daniel Eckstein knows relationships. As a licensed psychologist and counselor, he has worked with couples for more than thirty years, and he has published popular books and academic articles on relationship issues for nearly as long. In *The Couple's Match Book*, Eckstein shares his expertise for the benefit of other relationship therapists, as well as individuals and couples interested in delving into the workings of their relationships.

The essays, articles, and assessments gathered in *The Couple's Match Book* are drawn from columns Eckstein wrote or coauthored for *The Family Journal: The Journal of the International Association of Marriage & Family Counselors* over the past two decades. If the journal title suggests dry, academic reading, that is not what Eckstein and his colleagues delivered. Instead, their work clearly and compellingly presents complex ideas along with activities, exercises, and diagrams that engage the lay reader as well as the professional.

Eckstein's columns provide well-referenced scholarly information, such as the meaning of "homogamy" ("the tendency to select mates that are similar to oneself") and the impact of Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler on the field of psychology. He also includes writing prompts and provocative quizzes that can help anyone develop a deeper understanding of relationships. For instance, along with a discussion of family systems theory, Eckstein offers exercises that ask people to classify family members by their similarity to A.A. Milne characters—Eeyore, Tigger, and Pooh—to help them visualize the diverse roles played within the family. Similar activities appear throughout the book, making it accessible to a wide audience.

While the bulk of *The Couple's Match Book* offers theoretical perspectives on relationships with spouses, children, and pets, the final quarter focuses on personal stories told by couples who have struggled with relationship problems and found ways to resolve them. As implied in his metaphorical title, Eckstein's examples "light the match" that illuminates the underlying issues in a variety of relationships. Interviews and first-person accounts present stories of Internet romances, multicultural marriages, and abusive relationships, among others. Ultimately, some couples decide to rekindle the romantic flames, while others decide to blow out the candle and move on. These subjective accounts show how the theories put forth earlier in the book affected real people.

Rich with literary references, quotations, and occasional poetry, *The Couple's Match Book* overflows with perspectives on human relationships. The sheer amount of information presented in this king-size volume could overwhelm someone attempting a cover-to-cover read. Fortunately, the sections are clearly laid out in a comprehensive table of contents, so it is easy to locate particular areas of interest. The Couple's Match Book is meant to be kept on the reference shelf, where it can be ready for use for years to come.
SHEILA M. TRASK (September 14, 2012)

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