

“Are you married?”

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It had been a long time since I last saw my former Japanese language school teacher. We bumped into each other and amongst our small talk she asked me, “Did you get married?” “No I didn’t....” hesitantly, I replied. “Not yet?” she asked, again. I am a single female, this year to turn 38. I am often asked similar questions by people I encounter, such as, how old are you? Are you married?

Of course, I think there are many men and woman who desire to be married. However, they have probably not yet met a suitable match, they could be focused on their career or perhaps they are not even interested in marriage. There are various personal reasons for someone not being married. Surely, they are ‘fit’ to be married. And being single, does at some point bring about a sense of loneliness, wouldn’t you think?.

Recently, an interesting news article caught my eye. It was about the stigma attached toward people who are divorced or unmarried. According to this article, regardless of gender, when one reaches a certain age and they remain unmarried they are judged negatively and many preconceptions follow. Most of my surrounding friends (whom are of similar age) are married, and quite often it is assumed by new acquaintances that I, too, have a husband. Unmarried or single persons can be lightly treated, I sometimes feel. Being asked about whether one is married, is not always an easy question for those who have to answer.

The other day, I was once again faced with, “Are you married?” by a group of women that I met for the first time. I was perplexed as to how I should answer this. For a split moment I paused, then came up with my response. “No, I am actually recruiting for men at the moment,” I told them. We all laughed out loud about this. With such an answer, being asked if one is married, does not have to feel like such a heavy question, I thought.

