



Channel Nine's Married at First Sight expert, John Aiken.

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"I NEVER GET BORED OF RELATIONSHIP ISSUES, AND I REALLY ENJOY SEEING INDIVIDUALS CHANGE IN FRONT OF MY EYES."

RELATIONSHIP INFLUENCER

MARRIED AT FIRST SIGHT MAKES FOR GRIPPING VIEWING, AND RELATIONSHIP EXPERT JOHN AIKEN FEELS PRIVILEGED TO BE ALONG FOR THE RIDE, AS COUPLES EITHER MAKE OR BREAK ON NATIONAL TV

WORDS: JOANNE WILSON

In the name of commitment to ongoing professional development, it is essential for a marriage therapist such as myself so settle back in on the couch with a cuppa and chocolate to hog the remote during prime time TV to watch shows such as Married at First Sight.

My husband isn't convinced this is true but I'm sure you'd concur, it would be unprofessional of me not to stay abreast of relationship current affairs.

I'd also like to say that I rub shoulders with such famous featured psychologists as John Aiken but that would be a lie. John did, however, lend his time for me to interview him in the lead up to Valentine's Day.

Here's what he had to say.

As a highly regarded 'influencer' of Australian relationships, how did you come to specialise in this field?

I really fell into the world of relationships by chance. I always had a passion for cricket and rugby, and thought I would end up being a sports psychologist. But once I started to

study relationships I found myself intrigued by singles and couples and never looked back. It's dynamic and engaging work, and I can be really direct and practical in my approach.

What motivates you to invest so much energy into inspiring the relationships of Australia?

After 20 years of working in this field, I still love empowering singles and couples and making a difference. I never get bored of relationship issues, and I really enjoy seeing individuals change in front of my eyes.

You've worked on a number of major shows such as Married At First Sight. Have you had any humorous moments? What has been the most difficult?

On MAFS – wardrobe malfunctions are always pretty funny, and I generally have a great time playing up for photo shoots. In terms of difficult times, it's always sad to watch couples break up. Their pain is real, and it's very moving to be in the same room

when it happens.

What has been a highlight of your career so far?

Without doubt, my role as relationship expert on five series of MAFS. I had no idea it would be a show that would become so popular. It was a weird and unconventional concept, and I took a risk getting on board. But four years on, it's been an amazing ride, and one that has taken me way out of my comfort zone.

What is the most challenging aspect of your role in working with couples?

The biggest challenge working with couples is being able to control the room and make sure both individuals have a voice. Things can get very heated in a session, so it's important to stay impartial and really be able to contain the situation and keep couples on track and present.

What's the best advice you've ever received about relationships and who did it come from?

Dr John Gottman - "do little things daily

and often to bring your partner close."

I love this advice, because it's clear that relationship satisfaction isn't about doing grand gestures once a month. Instead, it's all about doing small intentional acts that make your partner feel important.

Technology continues to entertain and challenge couples. Have you noticed any other testing trends as we surge on into 2018?

Technology as it expands and changes will continue to be the biggest challenge for couples in 2018. From Twitter, Insta, Facebook and Snapchat, to receiving texts, emails and work notifications, technology can be distracting and can produce feelings of rejection in couples. So you need to put rules and boundaries around technology, so that you're always available to your partner when they want to connect.

I find that flourishing, successful couples seem to feature two very unscientific words, being respect and kindness. Would you add any