In physics, the theory of everything is a hypothetical framework that would explain everything in the universe, from gigantic objects like black holes to tiny particles like protons. Currently, there are two different theories: Relativity and quantum theory. Albert Einsteins theory of general relativity attempts to explain the behavior of very large objects in the universe like planets, stars and black holes. Quantum theory attempts to explain the behavior of very tiny objects in the universe like protons. One of the biggest problems in physics is that general relativity and quantum theory don’t seem to play very well together; Einsteins theory doesn’t hold for subatomic particles. For years, scientists have been trying to find a framework that would reconcile relativity with quantum theory and to date none has been found. Some scientists argue that the name *theory of everything* is deceiving because even if such a framework is proven to exist it wouldn’t answer all our questions about the universe, but would rather open the door for us to know what questions we should be asking. This idea is also present in philosophy. A philosophical theory of everything would answer questions like ‘Why is reality understandable?’ or ‘Why is there anything at all?’

I think an often overlooked area in which a theory of everything exists is relationships. I often try to reconcile why certain relationships work and why others fail. Of course, this is a difficult question to answer; whether you’re asking it about your own relationships or other peoples’. Most people have probably had at least one relationship they thought, hoped, would last forever. Looking back at the black box of those failed relationships there may be reasons as to why things didn’t work out but I think we often find ourselves wondering why those reasons were enough to come between all the love we had for that person***.*** I think if we want to answer this question, there are two big ideas we must consider.

The first is the idea of destiny. In Islam, the belief that God has designed a plan for all of us (predestination) is one of the six articles of Iman (faith). This means that everything in our lives from the day we are born to the day we die has been written before we were even conceived. It follows, then, that the Quran also has a verse which translates to “We created you in pairs”. This ties in to the common belief that everyone has someone in this world that they’re meant to end up with; a soulmate. The definition of a soulmate is “a person ideally suited to another as a close friend or romantic partner”. I’ve always been the type to believe in soulmates, to believe that somewhere out there is someone who is a perfect fit for me but after having been in love (thinking, hoping, she was my soulmate) I find myself questioning the whole concept altogether. Not in some sad way that I think I’ll die alone, but rather just taking a more logical approach. On the surface, the idea of soulmates is very intriguing, but once we start to question it we realise that it’s actually not built on a very solid foundation and it all comes crumbling down, like a house of cards. The most obvious question is; what if my soulmate dies before I’ve met them? Does that mean then whoever I end up with is just a consolation prize? I sure hope not. I like to believe that one person could have multiple soulmates and ending up with any one of them would be more than enough to make you happy.

I think the biggest problem many relationships face is that most people are more interested in ending up with the person who sets their hearts on fire, figuratively of course. I once read a post that posed the question “is love a choice or a feeling?” and when I was younger and more naïve I confidently answered “it’s a feeling, of course”. The post went on to state that, more often than not, marriages lasted longer when the couples believed love was a choice and marriages ended when the couples believed it was a feeling. The post made the argument that love was a very unstable foundation on which to build a relationship. Because there may be days where you love your partner less and would then have to make the choice to stay with them, to keep loving them. As hard as it is to admit, just believing that someone is your soulmate and that they were made for you is not enough to build a successful relationship. At most, it is only one half of the equation. Which brings us to the second idea.

The second is the idea of compatibility. Compatibility is defined as “a state in which two things are able to exist or occur together without problems or conflict”. I think one of the reasons a lot of people find their relationships failing is that they’re always looking for the person who’ll make their hearts skip a beat and not the person who they’re most compatible with. Of course, humans are all unique and the chances that you’ll meet someone with whom you have no problems or conflict is very, very small. The difference comes in when you choose a partner that you’re compatible with. Someone whose life and personality fits together with yours. For example, if you’re someone who prefers spending intimate time with people closest to you, you probably wouldn’t be compatible with someone who prefers to be at parties whenever there is one. This, however, introduces the notion of compromise. The party-goer may help the introvert come out of their shell and the introvert may help the party-goer realise the beauty in spending a Saturday night doing nothing with someone who means everything.

Because humans are unique and complicated it can be a bit difficult to spot someone who you’re compatible with. But I believe that when you find them, you will have one of the healthiest and happiest relationships you’ve ever been in. In a time where almost everything is available to us almost immediately, we’ve lost patience. When we want something, we want it now; when we want someone to make us happy, we want them now. But if we want to find someone we’re compatible with, we have to learn to be patient, and enjoy the process of getting to know someone. Knowing who they are and, furthermore, knowing what makes them who they are. Knowing what makes them happy, sad, or angry. Knowing how their smile forms, or how their tears fall. Knowing the things they hate as well as the things that set their hearts on fire. And knowing someone takes time. Sometimes we may meet someone and immediately feel a connection to them and mistake this for compatibility. Only to found out, a few months and two broken hearts down the line, that you were never compatible.

As with soulmates, there are definitely multiple people you will meet that you are compatible with. So the question is then, how does one decide on who they should be with? I think that the answer is that we should look for the few people that are at the intersection of ‘someone who makes my heart skip a beat’ and ‘this is someone I’m actually compatible with’. As with physics, this theory of everything will not provide a complete answer to everything we want to know about successful relationships, but will rather provide us with a much stronger foundation on which to build relationships that are more likely to end up successful. As a person who has been in a relationship, that didn’t work out, with someone who fell into this intersection, I can personally say that even this strong foundation is not enough; it just give you a better chance.

It may take time and you may get impatient but it’s important to always remember that this is just part of the process. And that there is someone out there for you to fall hopelessly in love with. The best you can do in the interim is just work on yourself and your own goals and wait until you find them, or they find you. Islam teaches us a valuable lesson about destiny, *what’s meant for you will never miss you even if it’s beneath two mountains and what’s not meant for you will never reach you even if it’s between your lips.*