

# ***LIVING TOGETHER***

# ***SUCCESSFULLY***



Most people want a lifelong partner - Someone they can enjoy the rest of their lives with. When you move in together or get married, you hope it will be that perfect relationship that lasts - "happily ever after".

But is it realistic, or should we just resign ourselves to a vague, "I hope it works out"? And surely trying it out first, living together rather than getting married straight away, is a sensible start? Well the statistics say no - more couples are breaking up now than when people waited for marriage before living together. And the statistics show that couples who live together are much less likely to stay together than those who marry. Why?

## **Trial Marriage?**

Cohabiting is not a good trial for a permanent relationship: cohabitees' attitudes are different from those of a married couple. Most do not try so hard to work through difficulties. If a couple have made the public commitment of marriage, they are more likely to look for solutions.

The answers to reducing the divorce rate are choosing carefully (not rushing in to anything), helping each other to enjoy the marriage, and asking for advice with difficulties early. There will always be failures, but there are many, many successful marriages.

## **Sex Blurs**

If a couple spend time getting to know each other well, without sleeping together, they learn more about each other than couples whose relationship is sexual - so they will be much more likely to make a right choice.

They find out more about the other's likes and dislikes, views, interests, background. They discuss more about what they expect from marriage, including sex, their views about having children, their different roles, etc. These are vital foundations.

Couples who begin sex and then move in together have often only talked about such things at a shallower level, with the sad result of a split later. When a couple start sex, it becomes a focal point and blurs differences, at least for a while.

## **Comparisons**

Surveys show that married couples get on better than cohabiters in physical and mental health (women in particular are often more anxious when cohabiting), in earnings, in avoidance of addictions, in men's faithfulness (a QUARTER of cohabiting men are unfaithful), in welcoming a pregnancy, in avoiding violence, in fulfilment and life span.

## **Breaking up hurts**

With a best friend breaking up hurts; more still when it is a sexual relationship. Research shows that first cohabitations are about FIVE times more likely to break up than first marriages, and that marriages after an earlier cohabitation with a different person are much more likely to fail than those that don't have that in the background.

A break leaves wounds which can be slow to heal - some never do. It undermines confidence and ability to succeed with commitment to another person. Cohabitation breakdown can be just as painful and messy as divorce.

## **Children**

An increasing number are born to unmarried couples. This places them at many disadvantages. Enquiries show that their greatest fear is not losing a friend, or being bullied, or not doing well at work or sport. It is the fear of their home being broken.

A stable home founded on marriage gives a secure childhood. Studies have also shown that having parents who have made the commitment of marrying enables a child to do better in school and later be more successful in work. They enjoy better health and, not surprisingly, have a much better chance of having a lifelong happy marriage themselves.

## **Play It Cool - Take Your Time**

So the best recipe for a lifelong marriage is... take time to choose, and wait for sex. It's fantastic to belong to each other for keeps! When the time arrives, a wedding need not be expensive.

## **Marriage Preparation**

Doing a pre-marriage questionnaire can really help you learn about each other. This can be arranged through PREPARE/ENRICH, John Deagle, Southampton Voluntary Services, Voluntary Action Centre, Kingsland Square, St Mary Street, Southampton SO14 1NW Tel: 023 8021 6003 Email: [prepare-enrich@scft.org.uk](mailto:prepare-enrich@scft.org.uk) Website: [www.prepare-enrich.co.uk](http://www.prepare-enrich.co.uk) or Nick Gulliford at FOCUS, Quel Bec, Cothelstone, Taunton TA4 3ED Tel: 01823 432420 Website: [www.affinities.org.uk](http://www.affinities.org.uk) They will put you in touch with somebody near you, who will provide it.

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