

Living Together

Successfully



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

But is that 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 to marry before living together. And the statistics also 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

Sex before marriage can lead to a couple thinking that, because they enjoy it, their relationship will last. But 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 for a lasting marriage.

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 cohabitees in their enjoyment of sex, in physical and mental health (women in particular are often more anxious

when cohabiting), in their earnings, in avoidance of addictions, in men's faithfulness (a quarter of cohabiting men are unfaithful), in welcoming a pregnancy, in avoiding violence, in helping each other through crises at work, in fulfilment and in life span.

Breaking up hurts

Breaking up with a best friend hurts; more still when it has been a sexual relationship. Research shows both that first cohabitations are about **five times** more likely to break up than first marriages. Research also shows that the marriage of a man or woman, who has cohabited previously with a different person, is much more likely to fail than a marriage which does not have that in the past.

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 parents splitting up.

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

The best gift you can give to your husband or wife on your wedding day is your virginity. You have kept the greatest gift for them.

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 – see the page on this website "Why pay the earth for your wedding?"

Marriage Preparation

Doing a pre-marriage questionnaire, each on your own, can really help you learn more about each other. This can be arranged through **PREPARE/ENRICH**, Southampton Voluntary Services, Voluntary Action Centre, Kingsland Square, St Mary Street, Southampton SO14 1NW Tel: 023 8021 6003 Email: prepare-enrich@scft.org.uk Website: www.prepare-enrich.co.uk. The questionnaire can be done on line or on paper, and afterwards you meet as a couple with a trained person or couple near you, who will help you by going through the comparison of your answers with you. And see our Marriage Preparation 1 pages on this site.

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