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David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Should We Live Together?"
The National Marriage Project, Rutgers, January 2002

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LIVING TOGETHER

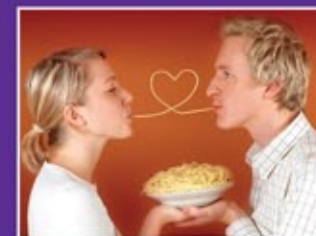


1 MYTH: Living together is an easy way to "try out" the relationship before committing to marriage.

Truth: While the idea of "test driving" a car before you buy it is a good idea; it doesn't apply to marriage. Living together is basically a "pretend marriage" and nothing like the real thing. Couples who live together often have attitudes like: "I can leave any time," and "my money vs. your money" that married couples don't typically have. Married couples often have a stronger bond to each other because of their vow of permanence. Married couples also tend to have less volatile relationships.

2 MYTH: Living together will give us a stronger marriage.

Truth: Although many couples think that moving in together can give them a great head start in their marriage, living together can actually harm your marriage. Couples who live together before they marry have a divorce rate that is 50 percent higher than those who don't.



3 MYTH: Sharing finances and expenses will make things easier on our relationship.

Truth: While sharing finances and expenses seems like the easy thing to do in the beginning, problems do arise. Just like any couple, disputes often center around money. Couples who live together have more financial issues to resolve. Conflicts arise over, who is responsible for which bill, and the rights that one partner has to tell the other how to spend "their" money.

4 MYTH: Your sex life goes downhill when you get married.

Truth: The level of sexual satisfaction is higher among married couples than for couples who live together. Couples who live together tend to be less faithful to their partners than married couples.



5 MYTH: Marriage is just a piece of paper.

Truth: Emotionally, physically and spiritually, marriage is so much more than a piece of paper. It is a commitment. Viewing marriage as only a legal arrangement strips it of its meaning and sets the relationship up for failure. If couples do not view marriage as a loving, committed relationship, divorce is almost inevitable.



6 Myth: It's only temporary.

Truth: Many people enter a cohabiting relationship hoping they will be married soon. However, living together isn't always a stepping-stone to marriage. Statistics report that 60 percent of couples who live together will not go on to get married either because they break up (39 percent) or just continue to live together (21 percent).



7 MYTH: Living together is best if there are children involved.

Truth: The effects of cohabitation on children is significant. Children in these situations are at risk of emotional and social difficulties, performing poorly in school, having early premarital sex and having difficulty forming permanent emotional attachments in adulthood. If the man in the household is not the biological father, children are at greater risk of experiencing physical and sexual abuse.



How to have a healthy long-lasting relationship.

No one wants to suffer the heartache of a broken relationship whether it is a divorce or the dissolution of a cohabiting situation. While living together may have short-term advantages, it comes at a high long-term cost. If your goal is to have a stable, healthy and fulfilling relationship, here are some tips.



1 TIME. This is the only surefire way to find out if a couple is compatible. Time gives you the opportunity to see how your partner handles different situations that life throws at you: the hard stressful times, the joyous and rewarding times, and the humdrum of everyday. If you can survive these life events with someone and still love them then there is an excellent chance your relationship will last.



2 COMMUNICATION. Relationships aren't always wine and roses. Know that your partner will disappoint and frustrate you at times. Knowing how to communicate increases your chances of being able to resolve and even prevent conflict.

3 CONSIDER MARRIAGE. What makes marriage unique from simply living together is a "vow of permanence." Partners publicly promise they will no longer be alone and no matter what happens down the road someone will be there to take care of you and support you.



4 PREMARITAL EDUCATION Couples who participate in premarital programs experience a 30 percent increase in marital success over those who do not. They report greater communication, sharpened conflict management skills, a strong dedication to one's spouse, and overall improved relationship quality.

Does living together lead to a lifelong marriage?
Not necessarily.....

Out of 100 couples living together.....



Only 55 will actually get married.....



Out of the 55 couples, only 12 will be married a decade later.



**From the National Survey of Families and Households*