

# Good Advice about MARRIAGE<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Do not be in a hurry to get married

- Average age to get married in US: 26 years old
- Waiting until 25 years old or older dramatically decreases the chances of divorce

## 2. Take things slow and easy

- No need to rush “forever” ... It will still be there
- Taking the time to really get to know someone for a significant period of time increases the likelihood that the marriage will last (tortoise vs. hare)

## 3. Become educated about relationships

- Reading, workshops, youth groups ... Take a class on “marriage and family” while you are still single
- Learn what the Church teaches about chastity and marriage
- Be selective and critical of resources ... Just because they are “experts” doesn’t mean they are moral or reflect Christian values

## 4. Develop healthy communications skills and conflict resolution skills

- “It’s not a matter of whether the couple argues or not ...but rather HOW they argue”
- Pay attention to and take seriously the ‘patterns of interaction’ between you and your significant other ... If you ultimately get married, you will likely continue the same patterns ... Are those behaviors and attitudes positive or negative?
- “Positive patterns of interaction can be learned” ... and should be practiced early in chaste friendships

## 5. Avoid living together

- Couples who live together before marriage DOUBLE their chances of divorce ... from 50% to 75%!!
- Marriage = Free, Total, Faithful, Fruitful ...
- Cohabitation is not free, because it *binds* two people into an intimate relationship without a lasting commitment
- Cohabitation is not total, because it’s always *conditional*
- Cohabitation is not faithful, because sex outside of marriage constitutes two people using each other for pleasure, not reflecting a “one flesh” union (marriage)
- Cohabitation is not fruitful, because it lacks the permanent commitment to responsibly bring new life into the world

## 6. For serious relationships – Take a ‘pre-marital inventory’

- A pre-marital inventory is not a “test,” but an assessment of a couple’s strengths and areas in which they need to apply their strengths to do the necessary work on their relationship ... There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers
- The most commonly used inventories in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis are *FOCCUS* and *PREPARE*

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: “Seriously Dating.” *Orange County Marriage Resource Center Website*. [www.ocmarriage.org/1d45](http://www.ocmarriage.org/1d45) ... Yes, that “OC.”

- Taking a pre-marital inventory and working with a sponsor couple through under the guidance of one's pastor / pastoral minister are both requirements for marriage in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

#### **7. For engaged couples – Participate fully in a formal marriage preparation process**

- Most parishes require a multi-layered program that may include a combination of the following elements: a pre-marital inventory, working with a sponsor couple, attending a Natural Family Planning class, or participating in a Pre-Cana Conference or Tobit Week-end
- The more a couple does to seriously and consciously prepare for marriage, the better their chances of long-term success
- Preparation requirements are not simply “hoops to jump through;” they are opportunities for a couple to invest in their relationship, and the sacrifice of the little time a program takes is well worth the lifetime of benefits for a marriage.

#### **8. For married couples – Nurture your relationship; do the necessary work**

- “Good marriages don’t just happen. They are built”
- Continually seeking out “formation” and “enrichment” opportunities, particularly through the Church can help a couple remain mindful of their commitment and the necessary effort it takes to keep the relationship fresh and alive

#### **9. For married couples having problems – Seek professional help**

- “The sooner problems are addressed, the easier they are to fix”
- Counseling is not only for “troubled” or “threatened” marriages ... Many times, it’s too late by then ... Counseling can be *preventative*, like taking vitamins, so you don’t get sick and then have to take medicine, or worse die, or in the case of marriage, to divorce.
- Our society has, unfortunately stigmatized relationship counseling ... More couples should be in counseling periodically throughout their marriage.

#### **10. For any serious relationship – Communicate openly and freely with one’s partner**

- Holding back causes issues to build up until they explode
- Couples should communicate their true thoughts and emotions with each other every day
- Each partner should not only learn to be an open and honest communicator, but one has to learn to be a good and active listener
- Spend time together ... alone time, quiet, uninterrupted time ... every day; don’t let parenting and work make you strangers
- For dating / engaged couples ... How can you pledge a lifetime of love and fidelity to someone, if you can’t tell them freely, without fear, that you love him/her or that he/she has hurt you in some way?

**Please Note:** Divorce always entails a sense of failure, but not all divorces are bad or wrong. Partners, who are being abused, need to get themselves and their children to safety. Sometimes, a marriage can be a threat to one’s psychological health. It is important that we always remain compassionate and non-judgmental to those who experience divorce, to both the spouses and their family members, especially their children.