

Should we Live Together Before we Say “I Do”?

Many couples in the United States are choosing to live together before marriage.

Young people in particular seem to believe that living together first is a good idea. Research shows, however, that couples who live together before getting married:

- Have a higher divorce rate
- Tend to be less happy in their marriages
- Have more trouble communicating

Couples sign a lease, share household expenses, buy furniture, adopt a pet and do many other things that make breaking up more difficult.

These statistics are especially true for couples who live together before making plans to marry. Why might living together make divorce more likely? Researchers have three theories.

1) Moving in together makes it harder to end the relationship. Couples sign a lease, share household expenses, buy furniture, adopt a pet and do many other things that make breaking up more difficult. It could be that living together puts some couples on a track toward marriage, even if marriage isn't right for them.

2) Moving in together makes marriage less special. Research shows that people become more negative about marriage if they live with someone first. It may be that couples live together and then marry thinking that they can just “move out” if the relationship doesn't work.



3) What marriage means to you. There are differences in people who choose to live together before marriage versus those who don't. Research shows that couples who live together tend to be less religious and hold less traditional values. These differences may partly explain why people who live together before marriage have a higher rate of divorce.

If you are considering moving in with your partner, here are a few tips to consider:

Take it slowly! Take your time to figure out what will be right for each of you in the future.

Once you live together, it may feel easier to stay together than to make the changes necessary to separate.

Realize it may be harder to end your relationship if you move in together. Once you live together, it may feel easier to stay together than to make the changes necessary to separate.

Talk together about commitment and the future of your relationship. Are you on the same page? Where do you see this relationship going? Do you want to marry one another some day?

Talk about your reasons for wanting to live together. Why now? Do you share the same reasons for wanting to live together? Does moving in together symbolize a new level of commitment in your relationship? Or, are you looking for a roommate? Living together because your lease is up or because your boyfriend/girlfriend lives closer to where you work might not be the best reasons to take this step.

Is there another way to “test drive” your relationship?

Consider taking a marriage education and/or relationship education workshop. Read a book about relationships. Talk to people you trust about what they see in your relationship.

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