

THE 10 THINGS

YOU NEED TO KNOW

Before You Say I Do



FIRST
things
FIRST

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INTRODUCTION

Alright, let's be real here. You might not have expected a 28 page ebook when you bought this. That's a lot of pages to read. But our goal with this ebook is to give you the 10 things you need to know before you say "I do" in the most simple way possible! As you go through this ebook, take note of words in italics - these are links to other resources if you want to dive deeper into that topic!

So let's just cut to the chase, shall we? The next 26 pages have a LOT of gold nuggets in it, and they're all for you! Engagement is a huge step in an exciting new adventure, but it's also not for the faint of heart. As you're getting ready to walk down that aisle, let's take a minute to think it through together.

From adjusting to your soon-to-be new normal to figuring out what your honey means when they give you that look, this ebook covers it all - and more.

So as you start your skimming (if you haven't already!), here are the 10 big ideas you need to know before you say "I do":

1. You grow into being "the one" for each other.
2. Engagement doesn't have to feel like you're hanging in limbo.
3. Mutual sexual fulfillment is not automatic.
4. Having a money talk now will save you from arguments later.
5. Unspoken expectations are at the core of nearly every disagreement.
6. Great communication is the key to being happy in your marriage.
7. Different is not deficient.
8. Couples that play together stay together.
9. Engagement is not the same level of commitment as marriage.
10. Getting married won't solve all of your problems.

Now before you skip ahead to the section you want to know more about, take a look at these questions. Ask yourself each of them, then ask them to your partner and have a quick conversation about it! Knowing the answers to each of these questions will help you get the most out of this ebook. There's no right or wrong answer, as long as you discuss your answers with your fiancé!

TO TALK THROUGH TOGETHER...

- Do you believe that marriage is permanent and purposeful?
- Do you think romance and realism can go hand in hand?
- Are you willing to sacrifice at your own expense for the sake of our marriage?
- Do you think that love is all you need to make a marriage work?
- What are your expectations for marriage and are they realistic?



NUMBER ONE...

YOU GROW INTO BEING “THE ONE” FOR EACH OTHER.

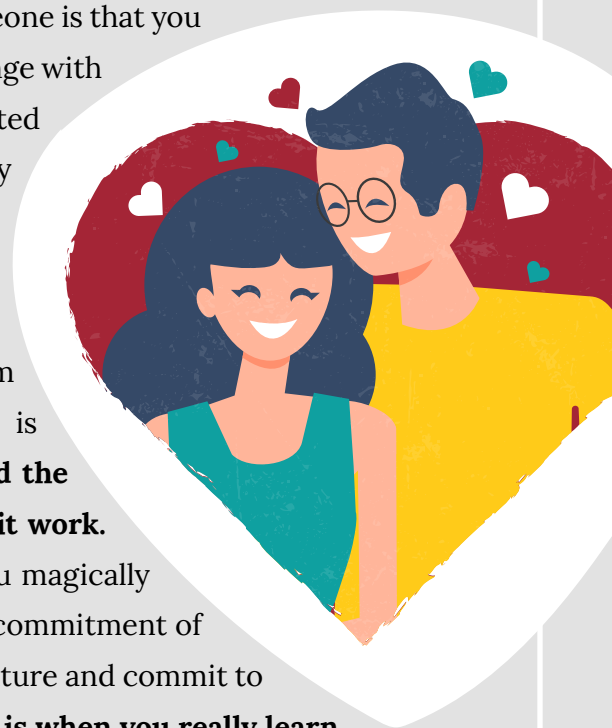
If you ask yourself questions like...

- “What if I’m not ready?”
- “What if I don’t know my partner well enough?”
- “What if there’s still more within me that I need to work out?”

...Please know that these are all real and valid questions to ask! But don’t let these questions scare you from committing. If there aren’t any **red flags** in your relationship and marriage is something you both want, have another intentional conversation about it and rest easy in the fact that **marriage isn’t a finish line for your relationship, it’s the start of a greater (more exciting and we’ll be honest, saucy) pursuit.**

The most important thing to understand about marrying someone is that you choose to make them “the one” for you daily. You two will change with time, you probably already have changed from when you started dating to now! This is part of the beauty of relationships. They ebb and flow – it helps keep you both from becoming stagnant. **Yes you’re staying together, but you’re not staying the same.**

“The truth is, a soulmate isn’t something you find,” said Dr. Tim Gardner, Director of the Marriage Institute. “A soulmate is someone you intentionally become. **To have a soulmate and the marriage you are looking for, you have to work at making it work.** Real and lasting love is something you do, not something you magically have. Falling in love is a great thing. After the spark and the commitment of ‘til death do us part’ couples have to set their course for the future and commit to be soul mates. **You have to learn how to stay together – this is when you really learn what it means to be soulmates.**”



ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS AND ENCOURAGE YOUR FIANCÉ TO DO THE SAME:

- “Do I feel genuinely safe with this person?”
- “Is this someone that I want to learn how to do life with?”
- “Are we both ready to fervently help one another be our best selves?”
- “Is this someone I want to pursue long after ‘I do’?”

Take time to talk and process through what you’re thinking with a **healthy married couple** in your life who you look up to, friends who share your desire for getting married, or family members who you feel know you best.

If you answered yes to those questions then you are closer to knowing and being sure your fiancé is the one. When you commit to your fiancé being the one for you now, you are simultaneously committing to pursuing and intentionally becoming the one for each other throughout your lifetime together. **It’s a wonderful, but not frivolous part of marriage.**

NUMBER TWO...

ENGAGEMENT DOESN'T HAVE TO FEEL LIKE YOU'RE HANGING IN LIMBO.

In a season of waiting, planning, and anticipation it's easy to feel like your relationship is on hold. Yes, you just got promoted to fiancé but now it's the in between for becoming someone's husband or wife that gives off this limbo vibe.

This season leading up to the next chapter in your life doesn't need to be focused solely on the one day that seals the deal (however some tips below on planning for the day may be able to help the important process). **You have an opportunity to *prepare* for marriage and not just the wedding day - you know, all of those days after the big one?**

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- **Premarital Education.** Education allows couples to identify potential areas of conflict and discuss them before saying "I do." Premarital education can resolve some important issues before they get out of hand and make it easier to seek help down the road. Some of the most hotly debated issues among couples are finances, in-laws, sex, employment, expectations and children.
- **Reading a good book together.** Like *Fighting for Your Marriage: A Deluxe Revised Edition of the Classic Best-seller for Enhancing Marriage and Preventing Divorce* or *Before "I Do": Preparing for the Full Marriage Experience*, or *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts*. Your marriage will be stronger if you go into it with your eyes wide open.
- **Practicing Self-Care.** But here's the thing - if you pay only a small amount of attention to your physical, emotional, and mental health, there's not much of your self left to give to the one you love the most. You can get so wrapped up in your job, rattled by stress, and constrained by deadlines that when you get home, you may only be able to offer your spouse the leftovers of your being. You can get tired. Your body and mind can feel spent. You want to connect with your spouse, but it can feel like you have nothing left to give.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

So, **self-care** is actually one of the most selfless gifts you can give to your spouse. Give a little to yourself, and you'll find you have so much more to give to your spouse. And then, watch things rev up.

- **Talk to a married couple you admire.** There's no better place to seek advice than from someone who is in the place you want to be in. There is wisdom in asking questions, pure gold from listening to those who have done marriage well and know you well enough to be open and honest about their experience. There's always room to grow - more in love, closer together, and into stronger versions of yourself.

Planning the wedding is a huge part of this season. But you can help keep it from becoming an energy drain and emotion instigator. But stress doesn't have to take over every part of your life! **Check out these tips for making the most of this season with as little stress as possible:**

- **Try to enjoy this time.** Instead of looking back at a whirlwind of activity that you really don't remember, take non-essential things off the calendar. Rest adequately, eat well and don't let others steal your joy.
- **Decide what matters most to you.** You can't give 100% to everything, so decide where you want to focus and delegate. This is a great way to involve family members without feeling like they are trying to control your day.
- **Decide on a realistic budget.** The average wedding today costs between \$20,000 to \$30,000, but couples can have a beautiful wedding for significantly less. One way to **begin your marriage well** is to be realistic. Know what you and your family can afford. The amount of money spent is not a determining factor in the success of your marriage.
- **Set Boundaries.** It's okay to say no, I don't know, and I'm not ready for that yet. If you don't want the help, don't have the answer, or aren't at that place in the planning yet, then speak up about it. You don't have to decide on the spot to appease someone.
- **Decide on Vows.** Want to stick to traditional vows, write your own, or have your officiant read vows you've decided on? This is one of the sweetest things that can slip off of the priority list by accident! Think about the promises you want to make to each other and embrace the life you will be choosing daily. **Here's more on vows.**



This season doesn't have to feel like a game of limbo without a prize. You can set yourself up for marital success and your relationship even can benefit from the time you've taken to pour into it on the front end.

NUMBER THREE...

MUTUAL SEXUAL FULFILLMENT IS NOT AUTOMATIC.

Sexual fulfillment in your marriage takes time, but also gets better with time.

In a collaborative research article published by The Huffington Post, **several studies reveal that married couples have better sex the longer they're together because of several factors, including things like...**

- Being able to determine what turns your spouse on/off with ease,
- Freedom from the anxiety or fear of rejection,
- Knowing how to ultimately please each other,
- Identifying cues of “let’s go” and anticipation,
- Greater freedom to risk and experiment,
- Emotional intimacy, which provides great foreplay and a deeper sense of connection during the act.

So, get excited about your lifelong sex partner. Together, you can literally experience sex at its best. (Whoop, whoop!) It may take a little while to find your rhythm together, but don’t let that deter you. Savor those moments in between where you get to know your spouse in a way no one else will get to.

If you want to hit the high note, then you must know that communication is key. Just because you two may know each other more intimately than anyone else does, it doesn’t mean you’ll know exactly what to do to help your spouse reach sexual fulfillment. **Communication is at the core of feeling connected.** When you feel connected, feeling sensual comes more naturally. “When disconnect happens in a marriage, intimacy on all levels goes out the window,” says Michele Weiner-Davis, whose life work is to **help resurrect flat-lined marriages** as a therapist. Communication is really the first step in being intimate.



Dr. Rick Marks, who has a Ph.D. in counseling psychology and an M.A. in marriage and family therapy, encourages you to increase intimacy in your marriage by asking these questions:

- **Discuss with your spouse:** When do you feel loved and valued?
- **Then ask yourself:** Do I make it difficult to create intimacy in my marriage?

Honest answers to these questions will help you pinpoint the areas where each of you can meet the other's needs. **This healthy balance of give and take can help you produce a more intimate and *fulfilling marriage relationship*.**

Fulfillment doesn't come automatically and isn't the same for each couple, but what if I told you that there was a number — a magical number — that defined the exact rate you and your spouse should have sex each and every week so both of you experience wonderful, marital, sensuous bliss that will last over the entire span of your marriage, “until death do you part?”

Well, do I have news for you... You won't find that magic number recorded anywhere!

While research does suggest that couples that have sex at least once per week are happier than those who have sex less than that, it still doesn't provide a solid answer to the question of how often a couple should have sex. All we know is that once a week is the average rate for couples who are happy.

If you do some research, what you will find are experts who say that there is no prescribed, scientific, formulaic number of times a couple should be having sex, but the magic number is what you make it. Raffi Bilek, a couples' counselor and the director of the Baltimore Therapy Center, tells Health, **“The truth is that whatever is comfortable for you and your partner is your normal. You don't need to be having sex any more or less than you'd like.”**

This is all well and good, unless, of course, you and your spouse can't come to an agreement on what is “comfortable” and “normal.” (Which probably describes a majority of couples out there.)

So then, how do you move forward with this touchy subject?



The truth of the matter is that the magic number is one you and your spouse have to determine for yourselves. It's your magic number. And here are some steps to move toward that.

You've got to talk about it. Start the conversation, and approach it with a great deal of respect for the other person's feelings and opinions.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- Are you someone who can get turned on before you have sex or do you have to be well into the foreplay before you are actually in the mood?
- Do you need to have sex to feel emotionally connected to your spouse, or do you need to feel emotionally connected to your spouse to have sex?
- How does stress affect your desire for sex?
- What turns you on about the other person? Is seeing particular behaviors or attitudes more likely to get your motor running? (E.g. I love it when she is in a good mood... I'm really attracted to him when I see him being active... I love it when he makes me laugh... She really steams up the room when we dance together... Etc.)

More than likely, you're not going to hammer this out in one sitting. It's an ongoing process and conversation to find a mutually satisfying rhythm to your sex life. This could even be a conversation you continue while you're having sex - letting your spouse know what they can do to help you feel loved.

When you're in the mood and enjoying one another's intimate company:

- Talk about what you like and don't like.
- Let them know what feels good - this isn't the time to assume or leave it up to a guessing game. Resentment can slowly build up if your spouse "isn't getting you there." No one can change directions if they didn't know there was another route that would get them to where they needed to go. Be the tender guide to your body and allow your spouse to take you in fully.

- Be flirtatious. Let your spouse know what turns you on and off. Both are important if you want to fan the flame and not put it out.
- Acknowledge that each time you have sex, it may take a different approach to get you both to where you want to be.

REMEMBER: You two are a team. You share the same goals. Neither of you should feel guilty for wanting to reach the finish line, so help each other feel comfortable in asking for what you need. Fulfilling each other is the ultimate goal. It is up to you two to determine what that fulfillment looks like on a personal basis.

San Francisco journalist Michael Castleman, M.A., who has written about sex research for 36 years, offers advice on PsychologyToday if it takes you or your spouse a little longer to orgasm.

“Encourage lovers to **focus on their pleasure**. Some people who take a long time get distracted from orgasm imagining how fatigued, bored, and annoyed their lovers must be. Reassure your partner that you’re not watching the clock, and not bored or impatient, that you affirmatively enjoy providing pleasure and satisfaction, no matter how long it takes. **Encourage your lover to focus inward on experiencing pleasure—and not on fears of any negativity you might be feeling.**”

Determine an actual, magical number for your relationship.

This is your mission, should you choose to accept it. Why is this important? It gives you a goal and informs each person in the marriage what they can expect.

You may need to compromise and meet in the middle. “It’s interesting that couples share decision-making on so many things. But when it comes to sex, one person makes the decision and expects the other person to accept it, not complain about it, and be monogamous,” Weiner-Davis says.



Weiner-Davis contends that the primary cause of a sex-starved marriage is easy to fix. A few basic changes can help you move from little **sparklers to fireworks in the bedroom**:

- Everybody has different ways of feeling connected to one another. You need to become an expert in making your mate feel connected to you.
- If your spouse wants sex more often than you do, don't delude yourself into thinking, "It's just sex." Sex is a powerful way to connect.
- When you understand your spouse's way of connecting, you don't have to agree with it or understand it. You just need to do it.
- Healthy marriages require mutual caretaking. Take care of each other. It is an act of love.

"When we learn to be better caretakers of each other, we will make this world a better place one marriage at a time," Weiner-Davis says.

Pay close attention to each other's intimacy needs. Some people need to feel emotionally secure and close before they're willing to even think about sex. If that's your spouse, you have a job to do - find ways to meet their **emotional needs** (and not just because you want to have sex).

Other people feel emotionally secure by being physically intimate. If that's your spouse, you may need to spice things up a little more than you're used to. If you keep each other's pathways to connection in your sights, finding that magic number can come more easily than you expect.

One more thing to keep in mind: Magic numbers can change. Life goes through seasons. Children come into the picture. Or they leave the house. Health issues arise. People take medication. Temporary periods of stress or exhaustion come into the picture. All these things can affect how often the magic happens.

The key here is to continue to be sensitive to each other's needs and feelings and to continue to communicate.



NUMBER FOUR...

HAVING THE MONEY TALK NOW WILL SAVE YOU FROM DRAMA LATER.

When it comes to marriage and money, there is never a shortage of drama. That's why you've probably heard it said a million times, "Money is the number one thing couples fight about in marriage." And research does show that it's true. **Research also shows that money is one of the least important factors couples consider when preparing for marriage. Coincidence? Definitely not.** In fact, the 2009 State of Our Unions: Marriage in America found a huge correlation between debt and marital satisfaction. **Compared to other issues, financial disagreements were shown to last longer, be more salient to couples and generate more negative conflict tactics.**

So what can you do about it? Maybe you've never given much thought to how you spend your money. Or maybe you just realized that money could be a trouble spot in your marriage. No matter what, healthy habits start with a great conversation with your fiancé!

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- What are your top 3 **financial goals** for us as a couple in the first 5 years of our marriage? 10 years?
- Do you currently have a budget? If so, how rigid are you with it? And do you expect us both to be on a budget once we're married?
- What are 3 **expectations** you have of me when it comes to how I handle money?
- Who do you think should **take charge** of handling our finances, from bills to budgets?
- If you were given \$5,000 out of the blue, how would you use it? Spend it? Save it? Invest it?
- What are 2 things you want us to save up for as soon as we can? What does that look like to you?

Want to have a head start on getting your finances on the right track? **Check out this simple list of things you can do to get started:**

- Consider taking a class on managing your finances together.
- Put all of your financial documents in a central location and go through them as a couple.
- Track your spending. In order to make appropriate changes, you need to know where your money is going.
- Start an emergency fund. Even putting a small amount in each month can be a safety net when you need extra cash.
- Make a budget and commit to living within your means.



NUMBER FIVE...

UNSPOKEN EXPECTATIONS ARE AT THE CORE OF DISAGREEMENTS.

There's a silent killer that has potential to ruin any relationship, and it goes by the name of **unspoken expectations**. It might sound dramatic, but it rears its ugly head in so many different ways, especially when you first get married! And if you don't address it soon, it will only grow a divide between you and the person you love most. It can impact your communication, your intimacy, your conflict, and so much more.

And here's the thing: you can't have one long, hard conversation and expect to be done. Instead, ***fighting unspoken expectations*** is a habit that needs to be formed early in order to grow throughout your marriage!

With time and effort, it will get easier. But for right now, let's touch on a couple of hot spots that most couples run into during their first year together:



BOUNDARIES:

- Do you currently feel uncomfortable with any of my ***opposite-sex friends***?
- If one of my friendships ***makes you feel uncomfortable***, what would you expect me to do?
- Do you expect me to introduce you to everyone in my circle? (Ex. coworkers, gym friends, childhood friends, etc.)
- Would it ever ***be okay for me to grab lunch or coffee*** with someone of the opposite-sex?
- How much PDA are you okay/not okay with?
- How can we keep our ***conversations about boundaries*** continuous?

TECHNOLOGY:

- What's a reasonable **amount of time** for me to spend on my phone/playing video games/hanging out with friends without you?
- How would you feel about me posting my political/religious/ideological views on **social media**?
- Should we know each other's usernames/passwords for our devices?
- Are you okay with having technology at the table or in bed?

THE IN-LAWS:

- How often do you expect us to visit with your family? And for how long?
- Is there anything about my family that you **don't like** or don't understand?
- What holidays are most important for your family to be together?
- How have you seen my **family influence** me and our relationship?
- What traditions from your family do you want to keep?
- What are 3 ways we can know we're **putting each other first**, not our parents?
- How can I **grow closer** to your parents and family?

BECOMING A TEAM:

- What does **being a team** in marriage mean to you?
- Do you think we should work together on everything? Or each just focus on the things we're good at?
- In what ways do you expect me to help around the house? (Ex. laundry, mowing the lawn, cooking, fixing things that break, dishes, taking the trash out, etc.)
- What are three of my strengths, and how do you want me to use them for the benefit of our marriage?

Unspoken expectations are hard. And they play into every single one of the rest of the topics in this ebook! So keep this question in mind as you continue through this ebook: **In what ways have my childhood, my experiences, and my expectations influenced the way I respond to my fiancé? And how can I communicate this to him/her in a loving, responsive way?**

NUMBER SIX...

GREAT COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY TO HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE.

Ask any married couple the key to a happy marriage and there's a 99.9% chance they'll mention communication in some way. Why is that? Well, **great communication is one of the key building blocks to having a lasting marriage!** If you work every day on **getting your communication on the right track**, everything else usually seems to fall into place.

So what does that look like? For starters, understand that **everyone communicates differently**. Most people think that women talk more than men. While this is often true, studies have shown that **it's less about the amount you talk and more about the way you talk**. For instance, have you ever had a conversation with someone where you both walked away thinking you landed on two different conclusions? Chances are, it was less to do with the amount of words either of you said, and more about how you said those words. But have no fear! No matter how differently you and your soon-to-be spouse communicate, there are some great ways you can bridge the gap. **Here are a few:**

- **Acknowledge the differences** in how you and your partner communicate. Does one of you tend to communicate with purpose to solve a problem or elevate your status? Or maybe you spend a lot of time communicating to bond and build relationships? Neither way is wrong, just different.
- **You don't have to get your spouse to talk with you in the same way you talk to your friends.** If your partner doesn't want to talk about the latest tech that came out or what happened on The Bachelor last night, **that's okay!**
- **Sometimes, you have to tell your spouse what you want from them first.** Do you want them to just listen or do you want to enlist their help in solving a problem? Doing this could spare both of you a lot of agony.
- **If you're not ready to talk about something yet, say so.** And then give a time when you think you will be ready to have a discussion about it. For the other partner, this is your cue to give some space.



- **Learn how to listen.** Most people believe that listening comes naturally. But it does not! It takes effort to really *focus on what someone is saying*.
- **Avoid mindreading.** Assuming you know what someone else is thinking can create a lot of unnecessary drama in your marriage.
- **Remember nonverbal communication.** It might not seem as obvious, but it actually speaks louder than words! Keep in mind your tone of voice, the way you're positioning your body, or the facial expressions you're making during conversations.

Alright, now what? It's hard to talk about communication if you don't actually communicate with each other! As you talk through the questions below, **try to apply one of the previous principles to how you communicate to and with your partner.**

QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- What does commitment mean to you?
- Do you think it's possible for *conflict* to be a good thing?
- What does your idea of an *intimate evening together* look like?
- What do you think will be our biggest challenge when it comes to managing our finances together?
- Do you want to have kids? If so, what are 3 things we can do to *keep our marriage strong*, even through all the change?
- What are 3 adventurous *date nights* we can try and put on the calendar within the next two years?
- In what ways have I helped you grow as a person since the start of our relationship? How can I help you grow from here on out?
- What's one of your big-picture dreams, and *how can I support you* in achieving it?

NUMBER SEVEN...

DIFFERENT IS NOT DEFICIENT, IT'S JUST DIFFERENT.

Every couple has differences. There's no getting around that! **But these differences don't have to be the spark that lights conflict in your marriage!** Oftentimes, especially for newlyweds, one spouse expects the other to think and act just like them. Whether it's differences in how you clean the kitchen or differences in moral beliefs, **tensions** can rise pretty easily. But it doesn't have to be that way. **Differences in your marriage are actually a great thing, if you're willing to *work through them*!**

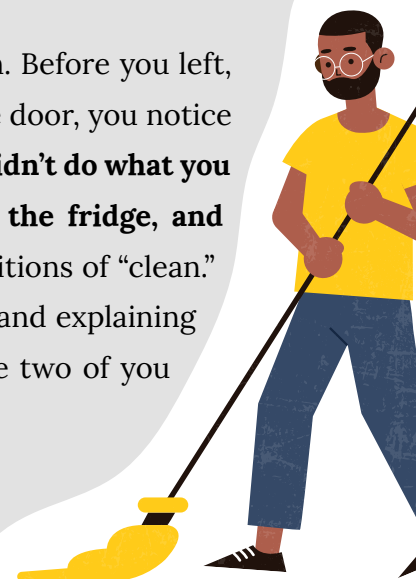
Think about it... Let's say you and your honey just got back from a vacation. Before you left, you asked your spouse to clean the kitchen. But when you walk through the door, you notice crumbs on the counter and dishes on the drying rack. **To you, your spouse didn't do what you asked. But to them, they cleaned all the dishes, threw out old food in the fridge, and vacuumed the floors.** What's the real difference here? A difference in definitions of "clean." Instead of complaining to your spouse, affirming the actions they did take and explaining what clean means to you can drive your relationship forward and help the two of you grow closer!

Now, before we get too far, understand this: there are a few differences potentially too big to work through. In fact, **there are 10, to be exact.** So that means the majority of differences in your relationship don't have to drive a wedge between you and your honey!

Here are few questions you can ask yourself to figure out if your differences could be a tough spot in your marriage:

- Are the differences in core values, non-negotiables, or just preferences?
- Do the differences complement or compete?
- Are the differences an obstacle or an opportunity?
- Are the differences a problem to be solved or a tension to be managed?
- Are the differences equally valued?

(Click [here](#) if you need some help breaking down those questions.)



Once you reflect on those questions for a little while, it's time to take the conversation to your honey! Check out the topics and questions below to start up some conversation about your differences, what your spouse expects, and how you'll work through them together!

QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- In the past, what do you think has been the biggest difference between us? Have we handled that difference well?
- Are there any ways that we're different that you know could be a source of tension after we're married?
- When conflict does come up, how can we help each other remember that different is not deficient?
- What are 3 ways we can use our differences to benefit our marriage?
- I wish you would _____ when you _____. (Now talk about how you can come together and work through that difference!)



NUMBER EIGHT...

COUPLES THAT PLAY TOGETHER STAY TOGETHER.

You might be thinking, “Well, duh. Of course we’ll always have fun together.” But in far too many marriages, couples throw **play** out the window once a busy season comes and replace it with serious adult responsibilities, careers, household chores, time with extended family, and community commitments.

There has been a study by The University of Denver’s Center for Marital and Family Studies that found that the amount of fun couples have together is the **strongest factor** in understanding overall marital happiness.

Here’s what that means: the more you invest in fun, friendship, and being there for your partner, the happier the relationship will be! Maybe not all at once, but being intentional about play and date night will strengthen your bond over time. Whether it’s dinner and a movie, **a creative date night**, or picking up a **hobby together**, it’s important to know how date night and having fun together can boost your relationship!



Research has shown that couples who spend quality time together at least once a week...

- Are markedly more likely to enjoy high-quality relationships and lower divorce rates, compared to couples who do not devote as much couple time to one another;
- Are about three times more likely to report that they are “very happy” in their marriages;
- Report higher levels of communication and commitment;
- State that they have a highly satisfying sexual relationship compared to couples who spend less couple time together; and
- Take that time as a chance to de-stress and engage in novel activities that are fun, active or otherwise arousing – from hiking or dancing to cooking together or playing cards.

Who wouldn't want all of those things in their marriage? **But here's the kicker: you can't start being intentional about date night when you notice you need it.** Starting the habit of regular intentional time together now is the key to sticking with it for the rest of your life! Below are some questions to ask your fiancé so you can keep play alive in your marriage forever!

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- What is the ideal date night to you?
- How can we make intentional time together a priority, even when things get busy?
- What are 3 date nights we can put on the calendar right now for after we get married?
- Who do you think should plan each date night?
- How can we both take charge of making sure we're spending enough time together?
- What do you think will be our biggest obstacle when it comes to having a regular date night?

NUMBER NINE...

ENGAGEMENT IS NOT THE SAME LEVEL OF COMMITMENT AS MARRIAGE.

Being engaged is an agreement of a plan for the future while marriage is the follow-through and fulfillment of that plan. While you're engaged, there's room to modify the plan and make decisions more independently. Once you're married, there's an understanding that your decisions affect your spouse directly. **When you get married it isn't just a declaration of love to your family, friends, and each other, it is a legal representation of the relationship.** The commitment level is legitimized and not just symbolized with a ring. Marriage is a wonderful thing to embrace, but it definitely is more dedication.

"Some people avoid marriage because of their fear of divorce, but **avoiding marriage won't really reduce one's chances of experiencing heartache and family instability,**" says Dr. Scott Stanley, co-director of the Center for Relationships at the University of Denver.

"To really avoid the possibility of such pain, one would need to avoid love, sex and children altogether. For some, avoiding marriage may actually increase their likelihood of experiencing the very thing they fear — heartache and break-up — **because marriage can be a potent force for clarifying and reinforcing commitment between two people.**"

Stanley contends that before **marriage is when you have the most power to affect your eventual likelihood of divorce. If you want your relationship to have the best fighting chance of lasting, here are a few things that he suggests...**



Here are his 7 tips before marriage:

- **Take it slow.** Waiting allows you to see a person's behavior over time versus a snapshot in time.
- **Don't ignore *red flags*.** Bad behavior will likely not get better once you walk the aisle.
- **Look for someone who shares your beliefs and values.** Chemistry is great, but it is not the binding glue in a relationship. Love does not conquer all.
- **Look for mutual dedication to the relationship.** Both people should be willing to make sacrifices.
- **Establish *mutual commitment* to be together.** Avoid sliding into staying in a relationship because of constraints such as signing a rent agreement or purchasing furniture together.
- **Get *premarital training*.** There is solid evidence that completing premarital preparation together can improve your odds in marriage.
- **Be realistic about potential mates.** There are no perfect people, but two imperfect people can walk the road together and be transformed by a life of loving commitment.

“Marriage involves a choice to risk loving another for life, but that is different from gambling with your love life,” Stanley says. **“Just make sure you are deciding rather than sliding your way into your future.”**

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS ASK EACH OTHER:

- How can we show each other we are all-in?
- Is there anything in the way of us fully committing ourselves to each other?
- If so, how can we get past it?
- How will our commitment to marriage look different than our engagement?

NUMBER TEN...

GETTING MARRIED WON'T SOLVE ALL OF YOUR PROBLEMS.

Marriage is the best! But it's not perfect. If you're engaged, it's only fair someone breaks the news to you. **There are some definite *misconceptions when it comes to being married*.** One of the biggest is that marriage will solve whatever problems you currently have.

As amazing as that would be, **a title and official seal of foreverness does not equal problem-free reality.** If you know something is creating friction for you now while you're engaged... work on it before "I do."

The hardest conversations are always worth having. Though they may not feel great in the moment, the temporary tension as you navigate what to say and how to solve it leads you to a sustainable *conflict-resolution driven marriage*.

You may have the luxury of going back to your own place if you need some space now, but once you're living together you only have a few rooms to work with - and if you're in a one bedroom apartment like some, *that may only be the bathroom!*

Start this exciting new chapter fresh. Lessen the baggage you two have by bringing in more solutions than problems. It is so worth it to do the legwork now than be disappointed and frustrated by dust that could've been settled!

Marriage isn't as complicated as people think – **small changes can make a big difference.** "I've done seven nationally representative studies of men, women and marriage. The common denominator in whether a marriage survives or fails is whether the couple has a sense of hope or futility," says Shaunti Feldhahn, a Harvard grad and ground-breaking social researcher who has worked on Capitol Hill and Wall Street. **"Feeling 'We're going to make it' leads to a different outcome than, 'This is never going to get better.'** So instead of believing it is futile to try, couples need to know that millions of marriages in our country are *thriving*. And that is the norm."

Try these tips for **having difficult conversations**:

- Make sure you have time to start and hopefully, finish the conversation.
- Put phones aside and make room in your schedule to make resolving conflict a priority.
- Choose a spot where you feel comfortable and safe talking.
- Remind each other before making points that you are on the same team. Win together and lose together. ("What is best for us" mentality)
- Actively listen. (Listen between the lines of each other's answers and make sure to ask each other clarifying questions. Be compassionate detectives.)
- Find a solution and make a plan where if you compromise a little you can still meet your goal.

When things are left unsaid, it's easier to become resentful and harbor negative feelings for the person who loves you and ultimately is your biggest supporter! (Otherwise they wouldn't be committing their life to you.) Like Feldhahn says, small changes make big differences. Work on having great **communication**, prioritize problem solving, and don't fall into the trap that an official title is a relationship clean slate - you've spent time building this relationship you plan on celebrating, so use your not-so-clean slate filled with what you know about each other to your advantage.



TO SUM IT ALL UP

Whew! If you've made it this far and feel a little overwhelmed, we promise it's going to be okay! Yes, there was a lot of information in here, but you don't have to know all the answers to every question to feel confident about spending forever with the one you love most!

There's a lot to think about before you get married. Not only do you have to plan an entire event for (likely) hundreds of people - and somehow enjoy it, you also have to think through forever with your honey! Pile that on top of work, friends, and anything else that comes up, it might feel like you're underwater. But hear this: **You're already well on your way to a great marriage.** (Whaaa?! How would we know?) Well, just by purchasing this ebook, you've taken the first step in a great direction! **And from here, our goal is to guide you through the rest of your engagement, through your first year of marriage, and beyond!** Want to take the next step in building the foundation for your marriage?

FREE ONLINE PREMARITAL EDUCATION!

A romantic close-up of a man and a woman in wedding attire. The man is on the left, wearing a dark suit, and the woman is on the right, wearing a white dress with a floral hair accessory. They are both looking down and slightly towards each other with soft expressions.

PREPARING FOR *Marriage* ONLINE

Are you ready for forever with your honey? Or maybe there are a few things you know you need to work through before you say "I do"? This online class will guide you both through the answers to these questions and MORE!

SIGN UP HERE!