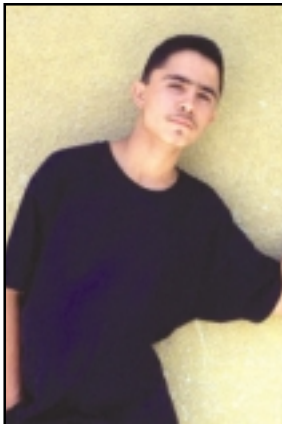


Is Marriage in Your Future?

Most teens expect to get married someday. But not all marriages are successful. Having a good marriage is more than a matter of luck. If you think marriage is in your future, you can do many things to improve your chances for success. These ten tips can guide you in making wise decisions. They can help you make fewer mistakes and avoid heartbreak in your current relationships, as well as prepare for a happy, lasting marriage.



Afraid of Marriage?

Perhaps you've heard that that 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce. It is good to know this statistic, so you don't enter into marriage lightly or think that marriage is easy. However, if you learn healthy relationship skills, such as communication and conflict resolution, and follow these ten helpful tips, you can dramatically lower your own personal chances of divorce.



The social science research on which these suggestions are based can be found at the Website of the National Marriage Project: <http://marriage.rutgers.edu>

The National Marriage Project's mission is to strengthen the institution of marriage by providing research and analysis that informs public policy, educates the American public, and focuses attention on the consequences of marriage decline for millions of American children.

The project is co-directed by two nationally prominent family experts: David Popenoe, PhD, a professor and former social and behavioral sciences dean at Rutgers, and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, PhD, an author and social critic.

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The Dibble Institute for Marriage Education is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping young people learn skills which enable successful relationships and marriages. We serve as a nationwide advocate and resource for youth marriage education and publish materials which help teach relationship skills.

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Ten Things Teens Should Know about Marriage

SAMPLE



David Popenoe
and
Barbara Dafoe Whitehead

10 Marriage Tips for Teens

1. Make marriage a top goal for your life.

There are many great things about marriage. Married people are healthier, wealthier, and happier than people who just live together or stay single. Married people even live longer!

2. Learn relationship skills.

Take advantage of any relationship and marriage education courses offered by your school, religious group, or other community group. These courses can be tons of fun, as well as helping you prepare for your future marriage. They may also help with your current relationships (dating, friends, siblings, parents).

3. Get as much education as you can before you get married.

Make sure you graduate from high school. Work toward a college degree or even a master's or higher degree. People with more education are more likely to marry and less likely to divorce. And they earn more money over their lifetimes.

4. Sex?

Sexual relationships carry a whole lot of baggage along with them. Worries about STDs, AIDS, or an unwanted pregnancy, or unhappiness about breaking up can make it hard to focus on your schoolwork. Most teens who are sexually active say they regret having sex and wish they had waited.

You can avoid these heartaches and regrets by waiting to have sex at least until you're out of high school, and possibly until your wedding day.

5. Marry in your twenties or older.

People who get married in their teens are two to three times more likely to get divorced than people who get married in their twenties or older.

6. Wait to have a child until after you are married and at least 20 years old.

If you don't, you are likely to live in poverty. In fact, only one-third of teen mothers ever finish high school. Having a child before you marry may cause lots of problems for both men and women. And the children of unwed parents face greater risks for problems of all kinds, including depression and mental illness, school dropout, teen pregnancy, crime, poverty, substance abuse, and suicide.

7. Be picky when you choose your husband or wife.

Opposites may attract, but they don't always get along together. Make sure that you know the person you plan to marry well. It helps if you have known him or her for a long time. It also helps to share the same core beliefs and values, especially about family life and children. Your marriage will be more likely to succeed if you and your future spouse have similar

backgrounds, personalities, beliefs, and goals for life.

8. Think twice before you decide to live with someone outside of marriage.

Contrary to popular belief, living together before marriage is not likely to strengthen your marriage or prevent a future divorce. In fact, living together before marriage is linked to a less satisfying marriage and a higher divorce risk. And the more partners you live with, the more likely you are to divorce when you do marry.

9. Build a relationship with an adult you can trust and work on strengthening that relationship.

If you are close to one or both of your parents, deepen your relationship with them. If your parent is not a positive role model, find an adult who is. Teens who share their lives and concerns with a caring adult—whether a parent or grandparent, friend, pastor, aunt or uncle—have fewer problems in life. And the fewer problems you have in life, the less baggage you will bring into your marriage.

10. Before you marry, take a premarital education course with your partner.

These courses can indicate how well matched you are as a couple, and they can help you have a more satisfying marriage.