



Marriage - It's Supposed to Be Forever!

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Statistics are horrible when it comes to the number of divorces we have in society. And the stats don't include people who break up after being in a common-law relationship. What's even worse is the effect that the conflict both before and after the separation has on the children. They are left with a future that includes not having their parents together.

It can take thousands of dollars as well as months of pain to end a relationship for the individuals involved. Sometimes family members die years later still holding onto bitterness and resentment.

Perhaps the reason that relationships are so difficult is that there is not enough thought, and planning put into it at the beginning. I frequently hear couples explain that they never really dated. They just "hung out" for a period of time and then, when one of the individuals needed a place to stay, they moved in together. It just seemed to be a good short-term solution to a problem and a way to save money.

One lady told me that "every woman wants to be with a wild tiger but once they are married, she wants to tame him". The strong tendencies involving total independence, rule breaking and risk taking that seemed so attractive at first are often later perceived as negatives. It isn't easy to live long-term with immaturity, bad attitude and irresponsibility. A man might find it endearing for a woman to say that she wants to be taken care of but, as time passes, she might be viewed more as a liability who doesn't want to contribute to the partnership.

Too often I have had clients who state that they lived together for years and then decided to marry even though they had relationship problems. They put all their time, money and energy into planning the wedding thinking that everything would miraculously improve once the ceremony was over. It didn't. In fact, they were usually left with considerable debt, embarrassment and disappointment. Others have thought that having a child would improve the relationship. That doesn't work either.

Before making your commitment consider the following questions:

1. Do you know the other person well enough to not be surprised in the future? Try dating for at least a year before even living together in order to establish a strong friendship.
2. Are you ignoring things that should be warning signs? Is the other person a drinker, lawbreaker or abuser?
3. Do the two of you have common goals and a detailed plan set out for achieving them?
4. Do you share the same values?
5. Are you able to resolve conflict? Do you avoid it, hold grudges or bring things up over and over again?
6. Will the other person be a good parent and share all the responsibilities for raising the child?
7. Can you imagine being with this person for fifty or sixty years even if you experience sickness, poverty and problems?

Relationship should not be entered into lightly and marriage is a form of relationship that requires serious long-term commitment. You see, it is supposed to be forever so choose your partner wisely.