

Twenty Good Reasons Why Not To Cohabit Before Marriage

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1. Those who live together before marriage are the least likely to marry each other.

A Columbia University study cited in *New Woman* magazine found that “only 26% of women surveyed and a scant 19% of the men married the person with whom they were cohabiting.”¹ A more comprehensive National Survey of Families and Households, based on interviews with 13,000 people, concluded, “About 40% of cohabiting unions in the U.S. break up without the couple getting married.”²

2. Those who live together before marriage have higher separation and divorce rates.

Psychology Today reported the findings of Yale University sociologist Neil Bennett that cohabiting women were 80 percent more likely to separate or divorce than were women who had not lived with their spouses before marriage.³ The National Survey of Families and Households indicates that “union begun by cohabitation are almost twice as likely to dissolve within 10 years compared to all first marriages: 57% to 30%.”⁴ Another five-year study by William Axinn of the University of Chicago of 800 couples reported in *The Journal of Demography* that those who cohabit are the most accepting of divorce.⁵

3. Those who live together before marriage have unhappier marriages.

A study by the National Council on Family Relations of 309 newlyweds found that those who cohabited first were less happy in marriage. Women complained about the quality of communication after the wedding.⁶ A physical relationship is an inadequate foundation upon which to build a lasting, lifelong relationship.

4. Those who are sexually active before marriage are much more likely to divorce.

A study of 2,746 women in the National Survey of Family Growth performed by Dr. Kahn of the University of Maryland and Dr. London of the National Center for Health Statistics found the nonvirgin brides increase their odds of divorce by about 60 percent.⁷

5. Those who live together are at high risk for contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

There are about five dozen STDs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, syphilis, and genital warts, whose incidence is skyrocketing. If left untreated, STDs can lead to arthritis, brain damage, heart disease, infertility, and even death. Nearly two dozen STDs are incurable. Annually about 10,000 teenagers contract HIV, and when it develops into AIDS, it is always fatal. According to gynecology researcher Dr. Thomas Elkins of the University of Michigan, when a person has three or more sexual partners in a lifetime, the odds of getting cervical cancer jump 15 times!⁸

6. Those who live together are at high risk for having an unwanted pregnancy.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, births to unmarried teenagers have continued to increase astronomically: 56 percent in the 1950s, 119 percent in the '60s, 38 percent in the '70s, and another 19 percent in the '80s. More than 1 million teenage girls will get pregnant this year, and nearly half of these pregnancies will be aborted. Half of the children born out of wedlock never complete school, and most end up on welfare.

7. Those who are sexually active before marriage have greater behavioral problems.

According to a study reported in *Pediatrics*, early sexual activity leads to serious behavioral problems. Of 1,500 girls studied, non-virgin girls were 2.5 times more likely to have used alcohol than virgins, 6.2 times more likely to have smoked marijuana, and 4.3 times more likely to have attempted suicide. Boys were 7 times more likely to have been arrested or picked up by police.⁹ *The Medical Tribune* reports that “sexual matters often predominate among the risk factors for adolescent depression and suicide.”¹⁰

8. Those who have had premarital sex are more likely to have extramarital affairs as well.

Premarital sexual attitudes and behavior do not change after one marries. Research indicates that if one is willing to experience sex before marriage, a higher level of probability exists that one will do the same afterward.¹¹ This is especially true for women; those who engaged in sex before marriage are more than twice as likely to have extramarital affairs as those who did not have premarital sex.¹²

9. Those who live together are likely to have a fleeting romance rather than a lasting relationship.

A romance is not the same as having an ongoing relationship. Relationships take time and work to develop and maintain; romance is a positive feeling toward another person. Romance without relationship is a brief encounter at best. Romance, in today's disposable society, is hastily devised and easily discarded at the first sign of conflict or disillusionment.¹³ There is no lasting commitment when times get tough. Good relationships are built upon knowing and enjoying each other on social, recreational, spiritual, intellectual, and communicative levels, not only the sexual level.

10. Those who have trial marriages do not have better marriages.

Trials or half steps that test whether the relationship works are not successful—in fact, quite the opposite. Research indicates that couples who live together before marriage have significantly lower marital satisfaction than those who do not cohabit.¹⁴ Conventional wisdom says it is acceptable to have a trial period to “try the shoe on first to see if it fits.” For marriage, however, just the opposite is true! “All a man's ways seem right to him” (Proverbs 21:2).

11. Those who live together have no lasting commitments or responsibilities.

Cohabitation involves no public commitment, no pledge for the future, no official pronouncement of love and responsibility. Theirs is essentially a private arrangement based on an emotional bond. Marriage, on the other hand, is much more than a love partnership. It is a public event that involves legal and societal responsibilities. It brings together not just two people but also two families and two communities. It is not just for the here and now; it is, most newlyweds hope, “till death do us part.” Getting married changes what you expect from your mate and yourself.¹⁵

Even if everyone in the world embraces a bad idea and thinks it's a good idea, it's still a bad idea!

12. Those who live together often have a “marriage of convenience” or a “marriage of compatibility” rather than a marriage of commitment.

“Marriages of convenience” are disposable; marriages of commitment are life long and not to be dissolved.

13. Those who live together do not experience the best sex.

The best sex is found in the marriage relationship. It is reported that if a couple abstains from sex before marriage, they are 29 to 47 percent more likely to enjoy sex afterward.¹⁶ In a study by Dr. Evelyn Duvall and Dr. Judson Landis, evidence was found that premarital sex was not as satisfying. They found that the frequency of satisfaction rose considerably after couples adapted during marriage.¹⁷ Another recent study by the Family Research Council titled “What’s Marriage Got to Do with It?” found “72 percent of all married ‘traditionalists’ (those who strongly believe out-of-wedlock sex is wrong) report high sexual satisfaction. This is roughly 31 percentage points higher than the level registered by unmarried ‘non-traditionalists.’” Psychiatrist and medical researcher David Larson, after researching the subject with Mary Ann Mayo, says that “the most religious women are most satisfied with the frequency of intercourse...and were more orgasmic than are the nonreligious.”¹⁸

14. Those living together often do so to “prove” their love to their partner.

The partner who demands sex as proof of love is flatly exploitative. He or she is looking out for number one at the other person’s expense. How the other party feels about it is not his or her primary concern. There is an ego and physical desire to satisfy, and the other party will be used to fulfill it. Such a person can become a dominating tyrant who demands compliance and may even become abusive. These early patterns of behavior carry over into the marriage.

15. Those having premarital sex may be fooled into marrying a person not right for them.

Sex can be emotionally blind.¹⁹ Real love can stand the test of time without the support of physical intimacy. If you establish a mutually satisfying sexual relationship, you lose objectivity and actually cheat on the test of time. The only way to rationally decide whether your love is for keeps is to remove any preoccupation with eros, sexual love. Otherwise you may marry a mirage, not a person you really know.²⁰

16. Those living together often have only superficial relationships.

Anyone can make love, but not everyone can carry on a meaningful conversation. A good relationship is much more than physical intimacy. Beauty is more than skin deep; there is a deeper intimacy of the mind and spirit that takes the time and commitment of a marriage to develop to the fullest. Physical attraction is insufficient glue with which to build or maintain a lasting relationship.²¹

17. Those who live together have more difficulty resolving conflicts.

Attempts are made to resolve conflicts with a hug, kiss, or more—rather than developing the ability to talk through them.

The qualities that hold a relationship together—trust, honesty, openness, deep friendship, spiritual intimacy—take time and effort to develop. When you focus on the physical aspect, you short-circuit that process. Physical intimacy is a mistaken attempt to quickly build emotional bridges, but relationships built on such an inadequate foundation eventually collapse.²²

18. Those who live together before marriage often suffer guilt and fear.

Such a relationship often produces feelings of guilt, remorse, and fear because of the danger of HIV, STDs, an unwanted pregnancy which says, “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed be kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Hebrews 13:4). This cycle of unhealthy feelings, taken into the context of marriage, is a major contributor to frigidity, impotence, and sexual maladjustment. Dr. Joe Aldrich says, “There is no prophylactic for the conscience.”²³

19. Those who live together before marriage often lay a foundation of distrust and lack of respect.

Mature love is built on the security of knowing that your love is exclusive. There is no one else. Premarital intimacy causes you to wonder: “If he or she has this little control with me now, have there been others before me, and will there be others in the future too?” As suspicion and distrust increase, you slowly lose respect for the other person.²⁴

20. Those who live together before marriage abuse each other more often and more severely than dating couples or married couples.²⁵

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