



GUARD YOUR HEART

GUARD YOUR MIND

GUARD YOUR BODY

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In this issue...

- Cohabitation v. Marriage

Cohabiting v. Marriage

Chances are that you know of a couple who are living together but not married. Cohabitation, or an unwed couple living together, is becoming increasingly popular while the importance of marriage seems to be diminishing. Due to the media and evolving social norms, relationships are changing and values are shifting. Luckily, more research is being conducted to help predict the outcomes and effects of these relationships, in comparison to marriage.

The meaning of marriage is being lessened due to:

Why?

- * Those of divorced parents are now finding themselves in adult relationships and some tend to feel as though marriage is not necessary.
- * Failing celebrity marriages are brought to our attention through the media.
- * Cohabitation is turning more socially acceptable, sometimes even glorified in the media.
- * Cohabitation is convenient in terms of finances in our changing economy.



Some believe that cohabitation is a good idea because it tests what marriage would be like, and it provides an “easy out” if the relationship ends. It’s the “try it before you buy it” theory. Just more than 50% of cohabitating couples get married. And unfortunately, of those couples who live together prior to marriage, the rate of divorce is increased by 65% percent.

Cohabiting has a dangerous effect on children, as well. A child is **50 times** more likely to die of inflicted injuries in a home where the couple is not married.

Imagine what the environment looks like for a couple who is cohabitating. On the surface, everything appears to be shared. But whose couch is it? Is that my TV or yours? She’s sitting in my chair. He’s using my microwave. There are specifically opposite answers compared to couples who cohabit and those who are married. In couples who cohabit, it’s “yours” or “mine”. But in married couples, it’s “ours”.

The Difference Between Cohabitation and Marriage

Some say the only difference is just a piece of paper, also called a marriage license.

A marriage focuses on giving and provides for the other person. A cohabitating couple usually is more self-centered. Cohabiting or “trying it out”, guards you from the other person. It keeps a wall up to shield you from any pain and gives you everything but your heart and commitment. In a marriage, the whole person is given to the other and trusts that person for life

“Children At Higher Risk in Non-Traditional Homes”, *msnbc.com*, November 18, 2007. Retrieved online March 26, 2009 from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21838575/>
 “Cohabitation Facts and Statistics”, *About.com*. Retrieved online March 26, 2009 from <http://marriage.about.com/od/cohabitation/qt/cohabfacts.htm>
 Phelps, Scott. *Aspire*. Arlington Heights: A&M Resources, 2006.

Tips for Setting Healthy Boundaries

It can certainly be difficult to set boundaries around a relationship when your feelings are so strong. Here are some tips to keep you and your relationship strong and healthy.



- Decide what time the evening will end before the date begins
- Hang out in groups
- Verbally make a commitment to each other
- Ask a personal friend to keep you accountable
- Remember, if your boundaries are being pushed, it’s time to re-evaluate your relationship.