Good Advice about MARRIAGE

1. Do not be in a hurry to get married
   - Average age to get married in US: 26 years old
   - Waiting until 25 years old or older dramatically decreases the chances of divorce

2. Take things slow and easy
   - No need to rush “forever” … It will still be there
   - Taking the time to really get to know someone for a significant period of time increases the likelihood that the marriage will last (tortoise vs. hare)

3. Become educated about relationships
   - Reading, workshops, youth groups … Take a class on “marriage and family” while you are still single
   - Learn what the Church teaches about chastity and marriage
   - Be selective and critical of resources … Just because they are “experts” doesn’t mean they are moral or reflect Christian values

4. Develop healthy communications skills and conflict resolution skills
   - “It’s not a matter of whether the couple argues or not … but rather HOW they argue”
   - Pay attention to and take seriously the ‘patterns of interaction’ between you and your significant other … If you ultimately get married, you will likely continue the same patterns … Are those behaviors and attitudes positive or negative?
   - “Positive patterns of interaction can be learned” … and should be practiced early in chaste friendships

5. Avoid living together
   - Couples who live together before marriage DOUBLE their chances of divorce … from 50% to 75%!!
   - Marriage = Free, Total, Faithful, Fruitful …
   - Cohabitation is not free, because it binds two people into an intimate relationship without a lasting commitment
   - Cohabitation is not total, because it’s always conditional
   - Cohabitation is not faithful, because sex outside of marriage constitutes two people using each other for pleasure, not reflecting a “one flesh” union (marriage)
   - Cohabitation is not fruitful, because it lacks the permanent commitment to responsibly bring new life into the world

6. For serious relationships – Take a ‘pre-marital inventory’
   - A pre-marital inventory is not a “test,” but an assessment of a couple’s strengths and areas in which they need to apply their strengths to do the necessary work on their relationship … There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers
   - The most commonly used inventories in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis are *FOCCUS* and *PREPARE*

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1 Source: “Seriously Dating.” *Orange County Marriage Resource Center Website.* [www.ocmarriage.org/1d45](http://www.ocmarriage.org/1d45) … Yes, that “OC.”
Taking a pre-marital inventory and working with a sponsor couple through under the guidance of one’s pastor / pastoral minister are both requirements for marriage in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

7. For engaged couples – Participate fully in a formal marriage preparation process
   - Most parishes require a multi-layered program that may include a combination of the following elements: a pre-marital inventory, working with a sponsor couple, attending a Natural Family Planning class, or participating in a Pre-Cana Conference or Tobit Week-end
   - The more a couple does to seriously and consciously prepare for marriage, the better their chances of long-term success
   - Preparation requirements are not simply “hoops to jump through;” they are opportunities for a couple to invest in their relationship, and the sacrifice of the little time a program takes is well worth the lifetime of benefits for a marriage.

8. For married couples – Nurture your relationship; do the necessary work
   - “Good marriages don’t just happen. They are built”
   - Continually seeking out “formation” and “enrichment” opportunities, particularly through the Church can help a couple remain mindful of their commitment and the necessary effort it takes to keep the relationship fresh and alive

9. For married couples having problems – Seek professional help
   - “The sooner problems are addressed, the easier they are to fix”
   - Counseling is not only for “troubled” or “threatened” marriages … Many times, it’s too late by then … Counseling can be preventative, like taking vitamins, so you don’t get sick and then have to take medicine, or worse die, or in the case of marriage, to divorce.
   - Our society has, unfortunately stigmatized relationship counseling … More couples should be in counseling periodically throughout their marriage.

10. For any serious relationship – Communicate openly and freely with one’s partner
    - Holding back causes issues to build up until they explode
    - Couples should communicate their true thoughts and emotions with each other every day
    - Each partner should not only learn to be an open and honest communicator, but one has to learn to be a good and active listener
    - Spend time together … alone time, quiet, uninterrupted time … every day; don’t let parenting and work make you strangers
    - For dating / engaged couples … How can you pledge a lifetime of love and fidelity to someone, if you can’t tell them freely, without fear, that you love him/her or that he/she has hurt you in some way?

Please Note: Divorce always entails a sense of failure, but not all divorces are bad or wrong. Partners, who are being abused, need to get themselves and their children to safety. Sometimes, a marriage can be a threat to one’s psychological health. It is important that we always remain compassionate and non-judgmental to those who experience divorce, to both the spouses and their family members, especially their children.