

There are many reasons couples move in together before marrying. Here are some of the most common:

- To spend more time together or less time apart
- To share expenses
- Fear of later divorce
- To try out the relationship<sup>1</sup>
- Feeling that marriage is “just a piece of paper”
- Thinking living together is preparation for marriage
- Only one person wants to get married

## The Exact Opposite

However, many of the reasons couples choose to live together are the exact opposite of what actually happens with the majority of cohabitating couples.

- Couples who cohabit are 50% more likely to split up within *three* years than those who choose to get married.<sup>2</sup>
- Couples who live together are much more likely to be *poor*.<sup>3</sup>
- Living together, first, makes divorce more likely if they do choose to tie the knot.<sup>4</sup>
- The rate of STIs among cohabitating couples is six times higher than that of married couples.<sup>6</sup>
- Women who live with their partners often end up with most of the responsibilities in marriage but none of the legal protections, especially when it comes to childcare and income. These women often contribute more than 70 percent of the couple's income.
- Many cohabitating couples are starting families without the guarantee of a long-term commitment, which for children means a lot less *stability*.<sup>9</sup>

## Marriage is Different

Marriage is different from any other relationship because it is the promise between two people who love each other, and who promise to be there for each other no matter what comes their way. Sharing a home, insurance, tax breaks, and automatic inheritance rights gives married couples legal and monetary advantages.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, married couples report higher levels of satisfaction and fulfillment in their lives.<sup>16</sup> Married people on average live about *ten* years longer than unmarried people.<sup>17</sup>

## Making the Choice

It's time to have an honest conversation with your boyfriend. First, make sure he is the right one. Set some boundaries and goals, such as no longer living together until you are married. It's not unreasonable to have a marriage goal in your relationship. If your boyfriend isn't willing to consider it or work toward it, then he just may not be the right guy for you. It's important that both of your goals be aligned. You cannot force him into a happy marriage, but you can choose to do what's best for YOU and wait for someone who will value you enough to commit himself to you for life.

You may be thinking about how expensive it is to throw a wedding, but a fancy wedding isn't a necessity for marriage. If you both are committed and ready to take the step, you can get married at the court with those closest to you as witnesses. You can throw yourselves a big reception later when you do have the money.

Married couples statistically are happier, have a more satisfied sex life, are wealthier, and live longer than other types of relationships.<sup>18,19,20</sup> And while the choice is clear, I do understand that it may not be an easy one to make if you are already living with your boyfriend. But, do the hard work now of defining your relationship goals, setting boundaries, and sticking to them. Do this, and later you will give yourself the most emotionally, physically, and spiritually healthy and satisfying relationship by marrying the guy who WANTS to spend his life with you. You are worth it, and you deserve the best.

### Resources include:

1. Stanley, SM, Rhoades, GK, Amato, PR, Markman, HJ, & Johnson, CA. The Timing of Cohabitation and Engagement: Impact on First and Second Marriages. *J Marriage Fam.* 2010;72(4):906-918.
2. Bennett, WJ. *The Broken Hearth: Reversing the Moral Collapse of the American Family.* New York: Broadway Books. 2003.
3. Crouse, JC. Cohabitation: Consequences for Mothers and Children, presentation at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Oct. 11-14, 2004, U.N. Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family.
4. Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the United States. Data from the National Survey of Family Growth, Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control. Atlanta, GA. 2002.
5. Booth A & Crouter AC (Eds.). *Just Living Together: Implications of Cohabitation on Families, Children, and Social Policy.* pp. 53-84. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
6. Crouse, JC. *Gaining Ground: A Profile of American Women in the Twentieth Century.* Washington, D.C.: Beverly LaHaye Institute, 2001.
7. *Living Together, The Truth about Cohabitation.* Heritage House '76, Inc. Snowflake, AZ. 2019.
8. Copen CE, Daniels K, & Mosher WD. First premarital cohabitation in the United States: 2006–2010 National Survey of Family Growth. *National health statistics reports*; no 64. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2013.
9. Reeves R. & Krause E. Report: Cohabiting Parents Differ From Married Ones in Three Big Ways. The Brookings Institute. April 5, 2017. Found at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/cohabiting-parents-differ-from-married-ones-in-three-big-ways/>, accessed 2/22/2019.
10. ElHage A. Institute for family Studies. For Kids, Parental Cohabitation and Marriage Are Not Interchangeable. May 7, 2015. Found at <https://ifstudies.org/blog/for-kids-parental-cohabitation-and-marriage-are-not-interchangeable>, accessed 2/22/2019.
11. Treas J & Geisen D. Sexual Infidelity Among Married and Cohabiting Americans. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62. February 2000: 48-60.
12. Manning, WD & Lamb KA. Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married and Single-Parent Families. *Journal of Marriage and Family.* Nov. 2003.
13. Stack S & Eshleman JR. Marital Status and Happiness: A 17-Nation Study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60. 1998. 527-536
14. Stets J. The Link Between Past and Present Intimate Relationships. *Journal of Family Issues* 14 1993. p. 251.
15. Waite L & Gallagher M. *The Case For Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier and Better Off Financially.* New York, NY. Broadway Books. 2002.
16. DeRose L. Institute for family Studies. Marriage Remains an Important Source of Life Satisfaction. June 14, 2016. Found at <https://ifstudies.org/blog/marriage-remains-an-important-source-of-life-satisfaction>, accessed 2/22/2019.
17. Kaplan RM & Kronick RG. Marital status and longevity in the United States population. *J Epidemiol Community Health.* 2006;60(9):760-5.
18. Michael RT, et al. *Sex in America: A Definitive Survey.* Boston, MA. Little, Brown, and Company. 1994. p. 124-129
19. Laumann EO, et al. *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1994. p. 364, table 10.5
20. Greeley A. *Faithful Attraction: Discovering Intimacy, Love and Fidelity in American Marriage.* New York, NY. Tom Doherty Association. 1991. Chapter 6.