

BEFORE YOU BEGIN *For Dating Couples*

Before You Say "I Do"

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When romance is in the air and a walk down the aisle is in your future, plans for the big event seem to take priority over planning for the marriage relationship. There is a multitude of advice and opinions from television and radio talk show hosts, magazine articles and of course, our peers on what makes a lasting marriage.

Dr. Jeffry H. Larson is a researcher and author who has devised a scientific method for increasing your chances for success. His book, *Should We Stay Together?*, is a wonderful resource for couples considering marriage. Dr. Larson identifies more than two dozen specifics that contribute to marital satisfaction and helps readers evaluate the relationship's assets and liabilities. He debunks common myths such as "Love is enough," "Living together will prepare us for marriage," and "You're my one and only."

A marriage and family therapist for more than twenty years, Dr. Larson observes that many couples in marital therapy trace current marriage problems back to the pre-marital relationship. Here are a few questions for you and your partner to consider before committing to marriage. Answer the questions by yourself, then find a quiet time to discuss them with your mate.

- Why am I getting married? Why am I choosing to share my life, my resources, and my dreams with this person? What has brought me to this point in my life? Why is this the time?
- Do my family and friends support my choice or do they express concern for my welfare? How do I feel about their apprehension? Have I really made a good choice or have I compro-

mised my values because I hope things will get better?

- What does commitment mean to me? Do I have a role model who will help me navigate the tough times? What do I expect after the wedding?
 - How do I handle conflict? Am I willing to face the situation and discuss options, or do I just hope it will go away? Can I talk about my anger or disappointment with my partner, and can we reach a compromise? Can we communicate without violence, put-downs, or walking away with issues unresolved?
- What goals and dreams do we have in common? How many children do we want? Where will we live? Where will we spend the holidays?
- Who will handle the money? How many credit cards will we have? How much money will we save from each paycheck? How will household chores be shared? What color will the bedroom be?
- What kind of marriage relationship do I want? How happy am I in this relationship? Who is responsible for my happiness? Do I have fond memories of our courtship?



ADDED NOTE

Take Your Time

Every person and relationship is different. Slow down and take time to think through these and other issues you may not have considered. Give yourselves the gift of time and the reassurance that you are the right person for this commitment. If the above questions raised concerns that you and your partner haven't discussed or thought about, maybe the relationship needs more time before you say "I do."