

Date Advice: 5 Conversations Every Couple Should Have Before Getting Married



By Mark B. Baer ESQ.

While it may seem odd receiving marital advice from a family law attorney, remember that people retain us to assist them in dissolving their marriages. Although the people and situations may differ, the reasons marriages fail tend to be rather consistent. We are therefore in an excellent position to give marriage advice. Here are five conversations every couple should consider having before tying the knot:

1. Communication

Poor communication happens to be a major cause of divorce. Since you are planning on marrying, you should already be familiar with each other's communication style. If you believe that your fiancé could use some improvement in that regard, it is advisable that you address that concern before marriage. After all, if the problem exists before marriage, what makes you think that it will improve with marriage?

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2. Finances

Before people marry, they have little need to discuss their relationship with money because it is not of particular importance. After all, as long as each person is pulling their weight financially in whatever manner is acceptable to both, there is no need for any discussion. However, as Harvey A. Silberman, family law judge for the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, in California likes to remind people, "Getting married in and of itself creates a pre-marital agreement – the *Family Code*." In other words, the terms of your pre-marital agreement can either be the terms set forth in the *Family Code* or terms that you specifically negotiated as part of the pre-marital agreement. What do pre-marital agreements address? They address financial issues. Therefore, you automatically become financial entangled with each other just by virtue of getting married. The failure to discuss such issues before marriage is a major regret for many. Such conversations should include the nature and extent of your respective pre-marital assets and debts, your values and beliefs with regard to spending and saving, expectations you each have with regard to the source of money to be used to pay for marital expenses, and many other such issues.

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3. Commitment

Marriage is a wonderful institution that affords couples significant psychological, emotional and financial benefits, in addition to being a commitment of their love to each other. Problems ensue when the couple's level of commitment are not aligned. How will this play out if one spouse is a workaholic? Are you committed to the marriage if you are disrespectful of your spouse? A conversation on the issue of commitment would be wise.

4. Expectations

People's expectations for themselves, their spouse and their marriage change over time. Those with the most successful marriages share these expectations with each other.

5. Human Nature

Rounding off the list is human nature. People don't change and nobody is perfect. The question is not whether you can change someone, but whether you will be happily married to them warts and all. This requires a conversation because one might expect to change the other.

Enjoy a happy and healthy marriage.

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