

WORKBOOK

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• *building strong marriages* •

**MARRIAGE
SAVERS**

Preparing, Strengthening
and Restoring Marriages

———— COUPLE'S WORKBOOK ————



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COUPLE'S WORKBOOK
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SHARING STRENGTH AND GROWTH AREAS

“Your strengths develop by working through your issues.”

Check what areas you agree or disagree most with your partner.

- **Select three Strength Areas** (most agreement and positive aspects of your relationship)
- **Select three Growth Areas** (most disagreement and areas you want to improve)

	STRENGTH AREAS	GROWTH AREAS
1. COMMUNICATION <i>We share feelings and understand each other.</i>		
2. CONFLICT RESOLUTION <i>We are able to discuss and resolve differences.</i>		
3. PARTNER STYLE AND HABITS <i>We appreciate each other’s personality and habits.</i>		
4. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT <i>We agree on budget and financial matters.</i>		
5. LEISURE ACTIVITIES <i>We have a good balance of activities together and apart.</i>		
6. SEXUALITY AND AFFECTION <i>We are comfortable discussing sexual issues and affection.</i>		
7. FAMILY AND FRIENDS <i>We feel good about our relationships with relatives and friends.</i>		
8. RELATIONSHIP ROLES <i>We agree on how to share decision-making and responsibilities.</i>		
9. CHILDREN AND PARENTING <i>We agree on issues related to having and raising children.</i>		
10. SPIRITUAL BELIEFS <i>We hold similar religious values and beliefs.</i>		

COUPLE DISCUSSION:

1. Take turns sharing what each of you perceive as your relationship strengths. Verbally share one strength at a time, until you each have shared three.
2. Use the same procedure to share and discuss growth areas.
3. Now have a discussion around these questions:
 - a. **Did any of your partner’s responses surprise you?**
 - b. **In what areas did you mostly agree with your partner?**
 - c. **In what areas did you mostly disagree with your partner?**

(If you are not living together, skip the cohabiting exercises)



COHABITATION: A RISKY BUSINESS

“You can’t practice permanence.”

COHABITING COUPLES

One of America’s most profound cultural changes in recent decades is the soaring number of couples who cohabit. Living together has become the dominant way male-female unions are formed, and couples are not better for it. Only a tenth of cohabitating couples are able to build lasting marriages. While 430,000 couples lived together in 1960, there were 6.8 million couples cohabiting in 2008 – a disturbing 16-fold increase. Of those couples, only 1.4 million married. What happened to those couples who didn’t marry? Perhaps a tenth were still cohabiting at the end of 2008. That leaves nearly 5 million couples who broke up. For at least one partner it was a searing experience. “It is a premarital divorce” write Mike and Harriet McManus in their book, *Living Together: Myths, Risks & Answers*.^{*} Women, in particular, are shattered. What they hoped would be a prelude to marriage ends with squandered time that cannot be recaptured. Failed cohabitation diverted tens of millions from marrying at all. That’s why the marriage rate has plunged by 51%. Cohabitation also increases the odds of divorce by 61% compared to those who live separately before marriage. And those who do stay hitched experience lower marital satisfaction. These are strong reasons for cohabiting couples who want their relationship to succeed to move apart until the wedding.

You are to be commended for taking two positive steps: (1) You are considering marriage. (2) You have enrolled in a rigorous premarital program that will strengthen your relationship. This process will help you identify and address the risk factors unique to cohabitation. Your goal is to work on these issues so you can increase your chances of a healthy marriage. Living together does not doom you to marital failure. It is not a self-fulfilling prophesy. You can learn communication and conflict resolution skills to replace patterns of behavior that put your relationship at risk. This process will require time and commitment to build a strong relationship. It is important to evaluate your relationship and understand how cohabiting has impacted it. Your best efforts will be worth the results. “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Matthew 7:24

COUPLE DISCUSSION:

1. Why did you decide to cohabit? _____
2. How long have you been living together? _____
3. Do you have children living with you? _____ How many? _____ Ages? _____ Whose children? _____
4. Have you previously cohabited? _____ With how many partners? _____ For how long? _____
5. What was your family’s reaction to your decision to live together? _____
6. Describe how your relationship has changed since you started cohabiting? _____

7. Why do you feel you are ready for marriage now? _____
8. Describe what the following terms mean to you?
- a. Unconditional love:
 - b. Commitment:
 - c. Fidelity:
 - d. Forgiveness:
9. What changes in intimacy do you expect after marriage? _____
- _____
10. How does your partner handle conflict? _____
- _____
11. Is your partner controlling? _____ Abusive? _____
- _____
12. Do you expect your relationship to be different after marriage? _____
- Explain: _____
13. Will you handle money differently after marriage? _____
- Explain: _____
14. Why do you want to be married in a church? _____
- _____
15. Will you consider moving apart until the wedding? _____
- Explain: _____
- _____

Exercise contributed by Marriage Savers - www.marriagesavers.org

*To order a copy of *Living Together: Myths, Risks & Answers*, contact **Marriage Savers**, 301-469-5873.