

Things to Think About Before “I Do.”

A Wedding lasts only a day, but marriage should last a lifetime"

There are many things that a bride and groom need to think about before their wedding day ... the dress, the honeymoon, the rings. In the midst of planning for that special day, it's important not to forget to plan for your marriage, which will last much longer than the wedding cake and flowers. Here are some important things for you to consider...

1. **Attend a premarital education class.** Couples who participate in premarital programs experience a 30 percent increase in marital success over those who do not participate. They report greater communication, sharpened conflict management skills, a strong dedication to one's spouse, and overall improved relationship quality.
2. **Find a mentor couple.** Find an older, more experienced couple to provide wisdom and support by serving as marriage mentors.
3. **It is no longer "I" but "We."** Marriage is a partnership. Both parties should take part in the decision making process. Make time to pursue activities together. Explore your common interests.
4. **Discuss your expectations for marriage and each other.** Identify roles and responsibilities. How are conflicts going to be handled? What are your marriage goals? Be willing to apologize and admit when you are wrong. Be proactive. Solve problems immediately and don't let misunderstandings bloom into larger conflicts.
5. **Discuss your goals for marriage to ensure your marriage will be successful.** Unrealistic and unmet expectations often lead to resentment in relationships. Be committed! Commitment is a choice. Couples who believe divorce is not an option going into marriage are less likely to take steps to end the relationship.
6. **Receive financial counseling.** Are you and your spouse savers or spenders? Save yourselves a lot of future headaches by discussing your spending habits and plans with a counselor and each other. Avoid wedding debt by working out a budget before the wedding.
7. **Why are you getting married?** Is it for commitment, love or loneliness, escape or impatience? Take stock of your personal priorities to assure that your relationship with your spouse gets the attention it deserves.
8. **Learn methods to communicate effectively and resolve conflict.** Not being able to communicate effectively is the number one reason marriages fail.

Marriage doesn't change people. Your marriage will be affected by both external forces (family, friends, and work) and internal forces (your spouse's thoughts and feelings). Learning to effectively communicate your thoughts and feelings to your spouse and resolve conflicts is crucial to the long-term success of your marriage.

9. **Discuss children and discipline.** How many? How soon? What are the costs involved? How will the children affect both your lives? Will both parents work or will one stay home? How will we work to keep our marriage healthy after we have children? How will you handle discipline?

10. **How will time commitments (work/career, family/friends, and social activities) affect your marriage?** Make "Date Night" a priority. It doesn't have to be expensive, just time scheduled for you and your mate to be together.

To find out more about strengthening your relationship, go to www.MarriageMississippi.com.