

## EXPECTATIONS

Everyone comes into their marriage with preconceptions of “the way things are supposed to be.” As a matter of fact, many couples just assume their partner feels the same way without the benefit of ever talking about it. Don’t assume anything. Have the conversation.

The following questions are designed to stimulate conversation regarding some of the important decisions and expectations that you have regarding your life together.

**Fundamentals – These questions are a good foundation to make sure you and your fiancé are on the same page when it comes to your marriage.**

1. What does marriage mean to you?
2. What did you learn about marriage growing up?
3. Did you have a positive marriage model (a friend or family member who had the kind of marriage you’d like to have?)
  - a. What are the things that you’d like to replicate from those friends/family members in your own marriage?
  - b. Any patterns or aspects of their marriage that you want to avoid?
4. Many marriage vows contain, “Til death do us part.” Is our marriage made for a lifetime?
  - a. Are we both committed until death?
  - b. Is there anything that could change that for either of us?
5. What are the non-negotiables in our marriage? (sexual infidelity, emotional infidelity, physical or verbal abuse, etc.)
6. Do you expect our love today to be the same 10/20/30/50 years from now? If not, how do you think it may change?
7. How will we make major decisions in life: as a team, or as independent individuals? Will one of us have more say than the other in specific areas of life (i.e., finances, children, work, etc.)?
8. What is your calling or purpose in life? Mine? How do those things work together?

**Faith – What is it that shapes who you are and what core principles do you want as your marriage foundation?**

1. What do you believe as it relates to your faith /spirituality / or core beliefs?
2. How important is your faith /spirituality / core beliefs as it relates to our life together?
3. Will we attend church / religious activities? Will we do it together? Where? What denomination?
4. Are there differences in what we believe? What are those differences? How will those differences impact our future?
5. How will our marriage be shaped by our core beliefs / faith / spirituality?

6. What traditions of your faith are important to you and what traditions do you want to be part of our future together? (holidays, rituals, practices, or expectations)
7. What will we teach our children? How will we raise them?

**Finances – Have a frank conversation about your finances.**

1. What do you owe?
2. What savings do you have?
3. What recurring expenses will you be bringing into the relationship? (student loans, alimony, child support, etc....)
4. What is your financial past? (judgments or liens, bankruptcy, or slow to pay)
5. Will you combine your finances or keep separate accounts?
6. Who will take the lead on paying bills and keeping financial documents straight?
7. What are your plans for your financial future? (savings, investments, insurance, power of attorney, wills, and inheritances)
8. Have you considered a budget for your combined finances?

**Feelings and Fighting – It is a guarantee that you will have disagreements. When you do, you want to be able to discuss those feelings and issues in a safe manor for you both.**

1. How emotionally dependent are you on one another?
2. How do I need to nurture you (support you) emotionally during the following times:
  - a. Good times
  - b. Times of loss
  - c. When we argue
  - d. When times are hard
3. How important is loyalty to you? What does it mean to you?
4. When we have disagreements, how do you want to communicate to one another?
5. What are your hot buttons to avoid when we argue?
6. How well do you “forgive and forget?”
7. What are your expectations about each other’s forgiveness?
8. When it comes to sharing your feelings, how much of what you are feeling do you want to share? How much are you expected to share?

**Fun – Fun and friendship are the foundations of a great marriage.**

1. What do you like to do for fun? Is it important that I enjoy your pastimes too?
2. How involved do you want me to be in your hobbies?
3. How much time do you expect to spend doing your hobbies?
4. What percentage of time would you like for us to spend alone together (versus spending time together with friends, family, associates, and etc.)?
5. What will our friendship together look like? What do you want to spend time doing together?

6. How much time do you want to spend with other friends away from one another? What is not enough & what is too much?
7. What are your expectations of one another when it comes to friends and co-workers of the opposite sex?
8. What are your expectations when it comes to friendship with ex-partners? Is it okay to maintain relationships with them on social media?
9. How do you wish to celebrate special occasions (birthdays, anniversaries, Valentine's day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.)? What are your expectations of gift values and, or traditions to be upheld?

**Family - You are about to become a family. What will your family look like in the future?**

1. Do you want kids? If yes:
  - a. How many?
  - b. When would you like to have kids?
  - c. Will either spouse reduce/eliminate their workload to take care of children at home?
2. If you have kids from a previous marriage or relationship:
  - a. What are the expectations when it comes to discipline and visitation expectations?
  - b. How involved do you expect one another to be with the mother or father of that child?
  - c. How involved do you want your spouse to be in regards to disciplining the children?
3. In-laws:
  - a. What is acceptable involvement of in-laws or extended family in your marriage and relationship? (What is too much and what is not enough?)
  - b. How often can they visit us/we visit them?
  - c. What type of information do you not want shared with them (i.e., arguments, finances, sex conversations)?
4. Power & boundaries:
  - a. How important is the family dynamic and what is the "pecking order" (does your husband/wife come before your parents? Before your children?)
  - b. How will that information be communicated to family members?

**The Real Fun (SEX) – Sex binds a couple together in so many ways. It is important to know you and your partner's sexual expectations.**

1. What are your sexual expectations in marriage?
2. How often would you like to have sex realistically?
3. What does sex look like after the first year of marriage, the 5<sup>th</sup> year, the 10<sup>th</sup> year, etc.?
4. What is acceptable or wanted from me, regarding sex and romance?
5. What is forbidden?
6. How important is romance in the relationship? What does romance mean to you?

**Future - A wedding lasts a day, but a marriage lasts a lifetime. What does the future look like around your house?**

1. What do you expect of one another when it comes to career choices, and the division of labor?
2. What do you expect in regards to income? How much money would you like to be making each year? Do you expect for us to make the same amount of money? Will it matter if one spouse makes more?
3. When it comes to dealing with certain issues, who has the “final say” to make the decision? (i.e. – who will discipline the kids, control the money, etc.) What happens when you disagree with one another regarding these issues, and how will you ultimately solve the disagreement?)
4. What does the division of household labor look like? Specifically, who will:
  - a. Vacuum the house
  - b. Clean the house
  - c. Maintain the exterior of the home
  - d. Cut the grass
  - e. Clean the bathroom
  - f. Wash laundry
  - g. Service the vehicles
  - h. Create the budget
  - i. Provide income
  - j. Update the checkbook
  - k. Pay the bills
  - l. Make major purchases
  - m. Plan social schedule
  - n. Care for kids
  - o. Discipline kids
  - p. Teach morals to the kids
5. Everyone seems to have little things that drive them crazy in both good and in bad ways. Unfortunately, it is often the little things that cause the biggest issues. So, if you know what the hot buttons are today, get them out of the way now. For example, toilet seat up or down? The proper way to use toothpaste? The proper way to hang the toilet tissue? .... What lights your fire? What puts it out?