

Pre-Marital Discussion Ideas

by

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The following topics are suggestions for discussions which will increase intimacy and knowledge of your partner and hopefully prevent unpleasant surprises, and disappointed expectations which can shatter marriages and relationships. Some may be harder to talk about, but they will be issues that a marriage will cope with at some point, and the more consciously, honestly, and openly they are approached the less damage they will cause in the future.

- 1) Lifestyle
 - a) Work hours
 - b) Play hours
 - c) Friends and family involvement and needs
 - d) Hobbies
 - e) Values connected with travel, work, play, etc.
 - f) Religious attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices
 - g) Pets
- 2) Financial obligations and standard of living
 - a) Income levels
 - b) Life insurance and retirement planning
 - c) Importance of savings, debts
 - d) Spending patterns on vacations, home, recreation, etc.
 - e) Budget issues
- 3) Dreams for the future
 - a) Will any of the things under the lifestyle section change as you age?
 - b) Plans for children, aging parents, retirement
 - c) Continuing education or career paths of partners
- 4) Family interactions and demands
 - a) Holiday rituals
 - b) Vacation rituals
 - c) Involvement with in-laws (socially and financially)
- 5) Use of leisure time
 - a) How much money does each person plan to spend in this area, and how passive/active are each person?
 - b) Time together and apart
- 6) Needs for space and intimacy in a home environment
 - a) This may include needs for private office, garage, yard, pets, and space for visitors, or no visitors at all.
 - b) Hobby space
 - c) What can't be shared?
- 7) Career demands

- a) Hours devoted to work and commuting to work
 - b) Social expectations of career
 - c) Costs assumed by the couple related to their jobs
 - d) Needs for spousal support or need for non-involvement
- 8) Education level and aspirations
- a) Partners' values and hopes for self, spouse, and children
 - b) Continuing education in field of hobbies or career path or change
- 9) Sexual Compatibility
- a) Monogamy or open relationship
 - b) Past lovers as friends or honest acknowledgment of their existence
 - c) Openness to discussing sexuality
 - d) Sexual behavior, including pornography and Internet sex
 - e) Physical attractiveness and fitness and its importance or lack thereof
- 10) Issues that go with having or not having children
- a) How many children to have and if adoption is an option
 - b) How to fund costs and what costs to fund
 - c) Family involvement with children
 - d) Education costs, health costs
 - e) Lifestyle changes; what will be sacrificed?
 - f) Impact on careers
 - g) Child-care responsibilities
 - h) Abortion, surrogates, sterilization reversal

Alden, Eleanor Spackman, *StepWisdom, Knowledge from the Ages for Successful Stepfamilies*, Tucson: Wheatmark Publishing, 2010, pages 54 - 56.