

## FIVE COUPLE SCENARIOS *Optional Activity*

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### **SCENARIO 1: Christopher and Ashley**

Christopher and Ashley have been in a steady relationship for the last two years. When they met, Ashley was impressed with how loving Christopher was with his son, Max. Christopher explained that things hadn't worked out with his ex, Emily. Ashley fell in love with both Christopher and Max. Christopher works in sales and Ashley works as a counselor in an after school program for youth. He brings home \$700 every two weeks and she brings home approximately \$550. For financial reasons, both Christopher and Ashley live at home with their parents. Every month Christopher pays \$300 to Emily for child support and another \$150 for health insurance. He spends as much time as possible with Max, seeing him at least two to three times a week and every other weekend. He and Emily have a good relationship. In fact, Ashley feels uncomfortable about how well they get along. Christopher says, "If Emily and I still loved each other, we never would have broken up." Recently, Christopher asked Ashley to marry him.

#### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What are the things that Ashley and Christopher have going for them?
2. What would be the advantages of getting married?
3. How would marriage affect them financially? What financial discussions should Ashley and Christopher have as they make plans about getting married?
4. What are the things that Christopher and Ashley need to work out before they get married?
5. What could they do before getting married to make sure that their marriage is as strong as possible?

### **SCENARIO 2: Ernesto and Anna**

Ernesto and Anna have a daughter together. For the last eight years they have lived in a house that Ernesto's father and stepmother gave him. Ernesto and Anna always referred to each other as husband and wife but they never actually got married because they could never afford to have a nice wedding. Ernesto was killed in a car accident six months ago and his dad said that Anna could stay in the house as long as she wanted. Then Ernesto's dad died of a heart attack. His wife immediately told Anna that she had to move because the house was going to be sold.

#### **Questions for Discussion**

1. How realistic do you think this is?
2. Ernesto and Anna considered themselves to be married. Would their relationship have been considered a common law marriage in the state of Texas?

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3. How could Anna's predicament have been prevented?
4. Since Ernesto and Anna weren't married, do you think Ernesto would be considered the legal father of their daughter? How would establishing paternity protect their daughter?

### **SCENARIO 3: Elisabeth and Brent**

Elisabeth and Brent fell in love in 11th grade. They broke up a few times but always got back together. They have a strong bond and enjoy many of the same things. Brent believes that no one understands him the way Elisabeth does. He just feels good when he's with her. Elisabeth loves Brent's sense of humor and his generosity. They argue mainly about how much time to spend together. Brent has always loved sports and hanging out with the guys. He also got involved with another girl one time and, although it's never happened again, Elisabeth can't forget it and tends to bring it up when she gets mad. When they graduated, Brent joined the Air Force and Elisabeth enrolled in a local college but continued to live at home. When Brent completed basic training, Elisabeth was able to go visit him. A few months later, she found out she was pregnant. They decided to get married.

#### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What do Elisabeth and Brent have going for them?
2. What are the advantages of getting married for them?
3. What will make getting married more complicated for them?
4. What do they need to work out before getting married?
5. How will getting married impact their child support and paternity situation?

### **SCENARIO 4: Angel and Lena**

Angel and Lena are young professionals in their mid-20s. Both earn around \$25,000 a year. They each have their own apartment. Neither has a lot of extra money so they spend a lot of time at each other's apartments. Both are very satisfied with the relationship and would like for it to be permanent. Angel wants to have a lot of children and Lena isn't sure she wants any. But she feels sure that Angel would be a great guy to have a child with. Recently, Lena suggested that they move in together to save money for a nice wedding in a year or two. Angel suggested that they go to the courthouse and get married and then move in together. He thinks they could have a reception later. What should they do?

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### Questions for Discussion

1. What does this couple have going for them?
2. What would they need to work out before getting married?
3. What would be the advantages of getting married right away?
4. What would be the disadvantages of getting married right away?
5. What do you think they should do and why?

### **SCENARIO 5: Jeremy and Lilia**

Jeremy and Lilia, both in their early 20s are in a committed relationship. Jeremy has a bachelor's degree in social work. He is in graduate school working on his master's degree and works part time. Lilia has an entry level job with a small computer company. She plans to get a degree in IT (Information Technology) and her company will pay half of her tuition. Both Jeremy and Lilia live with their parents. Neither of them has been good at saving money. They want to move out on their own because they want to be free of their parents' rules. They love each other and want to get married someday but don't feel ready yet. Last night, after a big fight with his mother Jeremy began searching the want ads looking for a cheap apartment. Seeing how unhappy he was, Lilia suggested they go ahead and get married. Jeremy asked Lilia to marry him and they set a date.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What would Jeremy and Lilia gain from getting married?
2. What are some potential problems they might encounter in their marriage? What can they do to prevent these problems?
3. What can they do to make sure their marriage gets off to a strong start?
4. What kind of plan can they put together so they both get to accomplish their individual goals?