

The slippery slope of cohabitation

Meg Jay
The New York Times

Most young couples now live together as a safe first step before marriage, said Meg Jay. But research shows that cohabitation is anything but safe: It makes couples less likely to be satisfied with their marriages, and more likely to divorce later. In my psychology practice, I have seen many couples move from dating to sleeping over to cohabitation along “a gradual slope” unmarked by “rings or ceremonies or sometimes even a conversation.” Without saying so, women usually think of living together “as a step toward marriage,” whereas men tend to view it as a way of auditioning their partners while postponing commitment. As years slide by, the two people find that despite the trial nature of their relationship, they have become bound together by shared leases, wireless contracts, furniture, pets, and friends. Those who work up the courage to split find that the “setup and switching costs” are nearly as wrenching as a divorce. Others drift into marriage, while secretly wondering “whether they have consciously chosen their mates.” To increase your chance of a satisfying, lasting relationship, it’s best to start with “I do,” rather than, “Maybe we will, and maybe we won’t.”

Viewpoint

“In the last few months, it seems to me that tattoos have gone from fad to raging unstoppable pandemic. Everywhere I look in Florida, I clock old geezers with hammocks and the word ‘Margaritaville’ emblazoned across their burly sun-blasted torsos. Chicks, too: Today I saw a superannuated South Beach swinger boasting a tarantula on her right shoulder. Every time she hoisted her sippy cup to her lips the spider jiggled. In the past there was one reason, and one reason only, to ink up: A tattoo confirmed your status as a scary outsider rebel outlaw sociopath. ‘Don’t mess with me because I am insane,’ was the intended message. Today, having a tattoo has lost its original meaning. Having a tattoo now has no meaning. Having a tattoo means that you have a tattoo.”

Simon Doonan in Slate.com