

Topic: Marriage and Family

Let's get started... Who do you know that is happily married? What is their secret to a happy marriage?

Background:

Most countries in the world value strong families and strong communities. In some countries, marriages are arranged by parents, extended family members, or professional “matchmakers”. In other countries, young men and women choose their own spouses, sometimes freely, sometimes with the advice of their parents, and sometimes only with the approval and consent of their parents. The laws about marriage and family also differ. For example, in some countries, a man may have more than one wife. In other countries, a man can have only one wife, and it is illegal to have more than one wife.



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

- What cultural differences have you noticed between marriage in your native country and marriage in the United States? What do you like, and what do you not like, about the differences?
- If you could design an ideal system for marriage, what would it be? Why?

Share your partner's answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

What advice would you give to someone from your country who told you they want to get married?

What do you think are the positive and negative aspects of being married? Being single? Which do you prefer, and why?

How old are people usually when they get married in your native country? Do you think this is a good age? Why or why not? How old do you think people should be when they get married?

Does your country have a system of divorce laws? If so, what are the grounds (legally acceptable reasons) for divorce in your country?

Do you think marriage should be “for life” no matter what, or do you think divorce should be allowable in certain situations? Tell a partner your opinions and reasons.

What are some advantages and disadvantages of “easy” divorce laws?

What are some advantages and disadvantages of strict, or no-divorce laws?

How do you think divorce affects children? Do you think divorce is ever a positive thing for a child? Tell a partner your opinions and reasons.

How do you feel about inter-faith or multi-cultural marriages? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of marrying outside one’s own culture, race or religion?

Are inter-faith, inter-racial, or multi-cultural marriages common in your native country? What are some problems people face in your native country in such marriages?

Do you know anyone (friend, family member, or co-worker) who is in a multi-cultural marriage?

Do you think married people who are unable to have children should adopt a child? What do you think about inter-racial and inter-cultural or international adoptions? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages to the child and the parents for such adoptions? Tell a partner your opinions and reasons for your opinions.

Do you know anyone (friend, family member, or co-worker) who has adopted a child from another country, culture or race)? What joys and challenges do they face?

New words and Idioms:

Family unit; spouse; matchmaker; backbone of society; environment; arranged; consulted; “love makes the world go ‘round;” get along; advice; positive and negative aspects; allowable; inter-faith marriage; multi-cultural marriage; inter-racial marriage; adopt; challenges.