



PRESS RELEASE FROM MARRIAGE FOUNDATION

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Date nights make for longer-lasting relationships – but only if you're married

Marriage Foundation research finds couples who go on occasional date nights have 14 per cent lower odds of their relationship breaking down – but only among those who are married.

Made famous by high-profile fans such as US President Barack Obama and former UK Prime Minister David Cameron, date nights are now firmly established entries in the relationship guru's handbook as a technique to keep a relationship away from the rocks.

Marriage Foundation, the think tank created to promote stable families, has compiled the first ever research into the effectiveness of date nights as a way to strengthen relationships. The report has revealed that only married couples reap the benefits of date nights.

In an analysis of Millennium Cohort Study data from 9,969 couples with nine-month-old children, 30 per cent went on date nights once a month. This group had 14 per cent lower odds of splitting up than couples who rarely or never spent an evening together without their children.

Cohabiting couples with a similar date night arrangement saw no change to their odds of splitting up.

Remarkably, the research showed when date nights became a weekly event they lost their benefit. Eleven per cent of couples who had date nights once a week or more often were no more likely to stay together than those who never made time for date nights at all, suggesting a degree of spontaneity is a key ingredient in a successful date night.

Harry Benson, research director of Marriage Foundation commented: "Couples are understandably keen to find the magic recipe for a long-lasting relationship. Date nights seem an obvious answer in an age where we are busier than ever and couples struggle to spend quality time together away from the constraints of family and home.

"However, date nights come below a number of factors affecting the longevity of a relationship, which include education and age. The single most successful way of staying together remains getting married. The odds of married parents splitting up are 57 per cent lower than for cohabiting parents.

"A marriage is a contract, a public commitment to make a relationship work for the long term. We are geared to make more effort and to compromise more readily to make such an arrangement work.

“An occasional date night seems to be a useful tool in the box for married couples to show each other that their relationship remains a top priority. But it must not be used as an opportunity for one partner to vent their grievances; our research shows sensitivity and an awareness of the needs of the other is highly important to relationship success.”

Sir Paul Coleridge, chairman of Marriage Foundation commented: “We as a society are at risk of trivialising the importance of family stability and the critical condition it is currently in. Family breakdown is now at near-epidemic levels. Forty-five per cent of today’s teenagers do not live with both natural parents.

“Every child who goes through the breakup of their family is likely to suffer educationally, materially and psychologically to some degree.

“There is no lack of advice out there for couples in terms of how to make their relationship last, some of which is a product of groundless fads and fashions. Our report gives the statistics. If you want to keep your family together for life, get married.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

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Marriage Foundation was founded by Sir Paul Coleridge, a High Court Judge, moved by his personal experience in 40 years as a barrister and judge specialising in family law. The Foundation seeks to improve public understanding of marriage reduce the numbers of people drawn into the family justice system – some 500,000 children and adults each year.

Marriage Foundation has highlighted the crisis of family breakdown. Their research has found that a child born today only has a 50 per cent chance of living with both parents by the time they reach fifteen.

Foundation research has also found that 93 percent of parents who stay together until their child’s fifteenth birthday are married.

A source of statistics on marriage, cohabitation, commitment, divorce and family breakdown can be found on the [Marriage Foundation website](#).