

4.015

1. Single. I don't have a girlfriend. I've been single for a while.
2. Boyfriend. I met Simon at a party and now he's my boyfriend.
3. Good relationship. We have a good relationship and enjoy doing lots of things together.
4. Engaged. I asked my girlfriend to marry me and now we're engaged.
5. Married. We got married in a big ceremony at a church.
6. Honeymoon. After the wedding, we went on a honeymoon to Hawaii.
7. Separated. We didn't get along, and are separated and not living together.
8. Divorced. We couldn't make it work. Now we're divorced.

4.016

1.

Woman Freedom is the best thing about being single. If I'm not happy with my boyfriend, I can always find a new one.

2.

Man My girlfriend and I don't want to get married yet. Why spoil a great relationship by getting married?

3.

Woman Money is important. I want a partner who can offer financial support as well as emotional support.

4.

Man I've always wanted to be a stay-at-home dad. But it's important that my wife helps out with housework and shares all the responsibilities at home.

4.017

Paula Did you hear?

Judy Hear what?

Paula Oh, you didn't hear. I talked to Brenda. She has some news.

Judy Brenda? News? About what?

Paula I'm not sure ... but she wants to see us both tonight at her place.

Judy Mm. Any idea what it's about?

Paula Well ... I think only Brenda and her boyfriend know for sure.

Judy You mean ... Oh! I don't believe it!

4.018

Judy So, come on. What's your big news?

Paula Yeah ... Did you rob a bank?

Brenda No, no. Nothing like that!

Paula Well?

Judy Yes, well?

Brenda Well ... George asked me to marry him!

Paula Wow, this is a surprise.

Judy Yeah, congratulations! When's the wedding?

Brenda Well, I didn't say yes – not yet. First, I wanted to talk to both of you. Paula, you're single and ...

Paula And I always will be.

Brenda And Judy, you're married.

Judy Happily married.

Brenda Yeah, you're both happy. So, the trouble is ... I've only known George for three months, so it's a big decision.

Paula Why spoil a great relationship by getting married?

Judy Oh, shut up, Paula. Don't listen to her, Brenda!

Brenda But how do I know ...

Paula How do you know you won't be separated and then divorced in six months?

Judy Don't be negative, Paula. What's so great about being single?

Paula Freedom. I have lots of friends and if my boyfriend isn't perfect, I can always find a new partner.

Judy Don't listen to her, Brenda. You want someone who can offer emotional support as well as financial support. Say yes. Get engaged.

Paula You're in love now, but things can change quickly. What if he loses his job? What if you hate his family?

Brenda I like his family – some of them anyway – and I love him!

Judy You see! She loves him!

Paula Uh, I knew it; a hopeless case.

Judy Let's talk about the honeymoon.

4.019

Counselor Good evening Brenda, George. If you're planning to get married, you want to make sure you're ready. I'm going to ask you five simple questions. If you answer the questions truthfully and agree, you're on the way to a very happy life together. Let's start with question one. Do you want children?

George No, not really.

Brenda What?!

George Oh. I mean, well, not right away... I guess.

Counselor Question two. Do you like each other's families?

George Sure, Brenda's brother's great. And I like her folks, too.

Brenda Yeah, I've got a great family.

George And ... my family?

Brenda George, you have to admit some of them are a little weird.

George Why would you say that?

Counselor Question three. What responsibilities will each of you have in the home?

Brenda You mean jobs around the house? George is a wonderful cook.

George Yeah ... if you want to have a barbecued steak every night! No, I think you'd do most of the cooking. Wouldn't you?

Brenda Well, I enjoy cooking. I mean, I could learn. But you would help with the housework, wouldn't you?

George Er... my mom did all the housework when I was growing up.

Brenda You're not marrying your mother, George.

Counselor Question four. What would life be like with half as much money?

George Money's not that important, as long as you have food, clothing, shelter – and a really big TV!

Brenda Financial support is important, George. Think about the children. George What children?

Counselor Question five. How do you settle an argument?

Brenda In the end, George usually sees things my way.

George Oh, well, as for that, you know, it's usually easier to agree than to argue.

4.020

Example: I talked to Brenda.

1. She wants to see us both tonight at her place.
2. I think Brenda and her boyfriend know for sure.
3. George asked me to marry him.
4. I don't believe it!
5. I like his family – some of them anyway – and I love him.
6. You're not marrying your mother, George.

4.021

Over the years, the Western world has seen a steady increase in divorce rates. On top of that, people are marrying later. In Asia, people are marrying even later than people in the West. In Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong for example, the average marriage age has reached 29-30 for women and 31-33 for men.

However, a lot of Asians aren't marrying later – they aren't marrying at all. Almost a third of Japanese women in their early 30s are unmarried, and in Bangkok, 20% of 40 – 44 year old women are unmarried too. By 2050, it is estimated that there will be 60 million more men of marriageable age than women in China and India. One reason is that historically, these countries have a preference for having boys, thus meaning there are more men. The other reason is that more Asian women are delaying or completely avoiding getting hitched.

As more Asian women enter the workplace, they turn away from marriage. This is partly because even when women take on full-time employment, they are still expected to play the role of

primary caregiver for children and husbands. For example, married Japanese women, who work an average of 40 hours in the office, do an additional average of 30 hours per week of housework. Not surprisingly, Asian women are turning away from this lifestyle and are enjoying the financial independence that comes with having a job.

The decline in marriage in Asia has resulted in a greater freedom for women and that is undoubtedly a good thing. However, it is also giving rise to a serious social issue. Compared with the West, Asian countries have invested less in social security to take care of their elderly. Now, with the decline in marriage and thus the birthrate, there are less young people to take care of Asia's aging population.

So how can marriage in Asia be revived? One solution is to make the prospect of tying the knot more attractive to women. Paid maternal leave and subsidized childcare are examples of how governments could ease the pressure on Asian women who want to both work and raise a family. Until changes happen, marriage rates may continue to decline even further in Asian countries.