

# Five Dates to go on before you get married...

## 1. Eat at a strange restaurant

Life is going to throw you many curve balls and many things will not go as expected. You're not always going to feel comfortable and you're not always going to know what to do. Eating at a strange restaurant is a great way to find out how you and your partner handle unfamiliar situations. Are either of you frustrated by not knowing where to sit? Is it easy to go with the flow when you realize the entire menu is in Vietnamese?

## 2. Visit the each others' hometowns

Where you come from is important information to share with your partner. Understanding your partner's past means you're better prepared for your future as a couple. As your partner gives you a tour of his or her hometown find out what type of child he was and ask about her favorite memories. Discovering who your partner was can give you clues to who they will become.

## 3. Learn something new

Marriage is just as much about committing to growth as it is committing to each other. The person you stand before on your wedding day is not the same person you will celebrate your 50th anniversary with. That person will be older, wiser, and have had millions of new experiences. You're going to grow and change and one of the challenges of marriage is to grow and change *together*. Take a class together, cooking, salsa, painting, hockey, and begin setting a foundation of a relationship nourished by growing together.

## 4. Visit a place of worship that neither of you belong to

I don't know why, but for some couples it's hard to have open honest discussions about religious beliefs. Most young people aren't particularly religious and find it hard to believe that they will ever care about where they will worship. However, once people start having kids and dealing with various crises the question of religion often comes into play and leaves many couples caught off guard. Attend a worship service that is unfamiliar to both of you and spend the afternoon discussing your thoughts about what you experienced. Making it a worship service neither of you are attached to makes it more likely that your conversation will be more honest.

## 5. Take pictures with Santa Claus

The holiday season is notoriously stressful. One of the best ways to handle stress is by laughing and being silly. Taking pictures with Santa Claus is a sure way to practice being silly in the midst of stress, a marriage skill we could all develop better.