Non-marital cohabitation is a social trend that leads to a number of problems for the cohabiting individuals, for children involved in the cohabiting relationship, and for society. We can help stem the tide. First, we can realize that the tide can be stemmed! Many social commentators, scholars, and policymakers seem to assume that cohabitation is only going to increase, so our sole option is to reduce the damage rather than stop the trend. This is simply not true. Look at what has happened with the tobacco issue over the last decade or so and you can see that, with enough evidence and concerted effort, damaging social trends can be slowed down and even reversed. Here are some of the specific things we can do to slow down and reverse the damaging trend of cohabitation:

For young adults:
1. **Don’t cohabit.** It is that simple. Just don’t do it. You save yourself, your partner, your family, your present or future children, and your society a lot of heartache and misery.
2. **Get the message out to your peer group.** The research shows that most young people believe cohabitation is a good choice, a good way to prepare for marriage or avoid the trauma of divorce. Help your peers understand that research does not support those assumptions. Help them see what the dangers are.

For parents:
1. **Be part of a happy, long-term, stable marriage.** The best way to help your children avoid cohabitation is to let them see their parents in a happy, stable marriage. If your marriage isn’t what you want it to be, get help. But don’t just jump out of your marriage—find a way to make it better, for your own sake as well as theirs.
2. **Teach your children the facts about cohabitation vs. marriage.** Teach them early about the value of good marriages and the pitfalls of non-marital cohabitation.
3. **Become involved in the movement to strengthen marriage in your community.** Many churches, community groups, and grass-roots organizations are working hard to help couples strengthen their marriages. Get involved, get trained to become a workshop leader, or help in any way you can. Let your children see how important this issue is to you.

For community, political, and church leaders:
1. **Lead out in supporting the family.** Publicly recognize the advantage of marriage for strong families, healthy children, and sound communities.
2. **Make resources (money, time, space, etc.) available.** Help your community to become “marriage-friendly” by supporting marriage-strengthening organizations in your communities, your churches, and among your constituents.

For marriage- and family-serving professionals:
1. **Share the research about cohabitation with your clients/students.** Help married couples understand that the needs of their children may need to take precedence over the desires of one individual. Assist them in understanding that such sacrifice can help not only the child, but also benefit them as individuals in the long run.
2. **Teach principles of wise spouse selection.** Help unmarried couples or single individuals understand the benefits of high-quality marriages for themselves, their posterity, and their communities. Help them understand the short- and long-term importance of the choice of a mate.

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