Top Vibe Magazine

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SEP 2026
ISSUE 208



Friday Club Business Network

MH MEDIA HOUSE

VCN NEWS
VAAL COMMUNITY NETWORK NEWS

Media House projects 2026

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Top Vibe

Magazine

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TOP VIBE MAGAZINE
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SEP 2026

1.

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Do you suffer from trauma



Charmaine Britz

Editors Note

Editor's Note: Hello, September! 🌸

September is a month worth celebrating!

It brings the promise of spring, new beginnings and fresh opportunities.

After the cold winter months, we welcome warmer days, blooming flowers and a little more sunshine.

September reminds us that every season changes—and so can we. It's the perfect time to refresh our goals, embrace new ideas, spend time with loved ones and simply enjoy the beauty around us.

So let's celebrate September with hope in our hearts, a smile on our faces and excitement for what lies ahead. 🌷🌻

Happy Spring, everyone! Let's make September a beautiful month to remember!

Charms

Ambassadors



Bokamosa Bless

Face of Top Vibe & Ambassador

Dear readers,

As the Face and Ambassador of Top Vibe Magazine, I would like to personally thank Carin and Charmaine for the platform that we can work on and reach out to the community, spreading kindness and hope during the winter season.

We would love for you to get involved and become part of the Top Vibe family. Every helping hand and every act of generosity makes a meaningful difference.

Thank goodness the winter is behind us, looking forward to hot sunny day's.

Take care till next time

Bokamoso Bless

Welcome dear reader,

I am the ambassador for Media House and proudly manage the social side of our community outreach. It is truly an honor to share all our events and activities on our Facebook page.

We would love for you to interact with us, share our posts, and take part in our charity events and community projects. Together, we can make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Thank you very much for your support and kindness.

Sarel Botha



Sarel Botha

Social Media &- Ambassador

Media House projects 2026





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Living Together Does Not Mean You Are Married: Understanding Cohabitation in South African Law

By IMH Attorneys Inc.

"We have lived together for years. Surely we are married in the eyes of the law?"

It is one of the most common misconceptions about relationships in South Africa.

A couple may live together for ten, fifteen or even twenty years. They may share a home, raise children together, combine their finances and introduce one another as husband and wife.

Yet, when the relationship ends, one partner may discover that the legal protection they believed existed does not automatically exist at all.

Living Together Does Not Mean You Are Married: Understanding Cohabitation in South African Law

Simply living together does not, by itself, make you legally married.

South African law does not generally recognise an automatic "common-law marriage" merely because two people have lived together for a lengthy period.

This distinction can have serious consequences when a relationship ends through separation or death.

Living Together Is Not the Same as Being Married

Many people believe that there is a particular period after which cohabiting partners automatically acquire the legal status of spouses.

There is no general rule that says: "If you live together for five years, you are legally married."

Nor is there a rule that automatically turns a relationship into a marriage because the couple:

* have children together;
* share household expenses;
* own assets together;
* share a surname;
* have a joint bank account; or
* refer to one another as husband and wife.

These factors may be relevant when considering the nature of the relationship or a possible legal claim. However, they do not automatically create a marriage.

The Constitutional Court has recognised the important distinction between marriage and cohabitation. Marriage carries legal rights and obligations that arise by operation of law, whereas the position of unmarried cohabitants is not automatically governed by the same legal framework.

What Makes a Marriage Legally Recognised?

South African law recognises different forms of legally recognised marriages and unions, provided that the relevant legal requirements have been met.

These include, among others:

* civil marriages;
* civil unions; and
* customary marriages.

A civil marriage is formally concluded in accordance with the applicable legal requirements, including solemnisation by an authorised marriage officer.

Marriage is therefore not simply a description of a committed relationship. It is a legal status with specific consequences.

Those consequences may affect matters such as:

* property ownership;
* matrimonial property rights;
* maintenance obligations;
* inheritance;
* pension and other benefits; and
* the financial consequences of divorce.

For this reason, couples should not assume that a relationship that looks like a marriage will necessarily have the same legal consequences as a marriage.

An Important Distinction: Customary Marriage and Cohabitation

It is particularly important not to confuse ordinary cohabitation with a customary marriage.

A couple may be validly married under customary law even if they have never concluded a civil marriage.

Whether a valid customary marriage exists depends on whether the legal requirements for a customary marriage have been met.

The 31 August 2026 Registration Deadline

The Department of Home Affairs has announced that 31 August 2026 is the deadline for qualifying customary marriages to be registered during the current special registration period.

The special registration period was introduced to allow certain customary marriages that were not registered within the prescribed period to be regularised.

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However, there is an important legal distinction that should not be overlooked:

Registration and validity are not necessarily the same thing.

The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act places a duty on spouses to ensure that a customary marriage is registered, but the Act also provides that the failure to register a customary marriage does not, by itself, affect the validity of an otherwise valid customary marriage.

Therefore, a person who believes that they may have entered into a valid customary marriage should not simply assume that they are an unmarried cohabitant because the marriage was never registered.
Legal advice should be obtained to determine the true legal position.

"But We Shared Everything"

This is where many people encounter difficulties.
Imagine a couple who has lived together for fifteen years.
One partner owns the family home in their own name. The other contributes towards household expenses, groceries, renovations and the general running of the household.

The couple may have built a life together. They may genuinely regard the home as "our house".
But when the relationship ends, an important legal question arises:
Who is the legal owner of the property?

Cohabitation does not automatically create a joint estate.
Nor does it automatically mean that every asset accumulated during the relationship belongs equally to both partners.

The starting point will often include questions such as:

* In whose name is the property registered?
* Who purchased the asset?
* What contributions were made by each party?
* Was there an agreement between the parties?
* Was a contribution intended to create a financial interest?
* Can another recognised legal remedy be established?

The answer will depend on the particular facts of each case.

Does Living Together Give You a Right to Half of Your Partner's Assets?

Not automatically.
One of the most dangerous assumptions a cohabiting partner can make is:
"We have been together for years, so I am entitled to half of everything."
That is not the general position in South African law.
Unlike certain consequences that may arise from a marriage and its applicable matrimonial property regime, cohabitation alone does not automatically create an entitlement to half of a partner's assets.

This does not mean, however, that an unmarried partner can never have a claim.

Depending on the circumstances, a person may have a claim based on:

* an express agreement;
* a tacit agreement;
* a contribution to a particular asset; or
* a universal partnership.

Each of these possibilities has its own legal requirements.

What Is a Universal Partnership?

A universal partnership is one of the legal concepts that may become relevant when a long-term cohabiting relationship ends.

The Supreme Court of Appeal has confirmed that a universal partnership may arise between unmarried cohabitants where the necessary requirements are established.
Importantly, the parties do not necessarily need to have signed a formal partnership agreement.

A partnership may, in appropriate circumstances, arise from the conduct of the parties and the manner in which they organised their financial and domestic lives.
However, this is where another misconception must be avoided.

Living Together Does Not Automatically Create a Universal Partnership

A long relationship, by itself, is not enough.
Living together and having children together does not automatically prove that the parties entered into a universal partnership.
The court must consider the facts and evidence to determine whether the requirements for a partnership have been established.

The traditional requirements considered by the courts include whether:

* each party contributed, or undertook to contribute, something to the partnership, such as money, labour or skill;

Living Together Does Not Mean You Are Married: Understanding Cohabitation in South African Law

* the enterprise was carried on for the joint benefit of the parties; and
* the parties pursued an object directed at making a profit or accumulating benefits in the manner required for a partnership.

The facts of the relationship and the parties' conduct are critically important.

A successful universal partnership claim is therefore not automatic. It must be properly established.

What About Maintenance When the Relationship Ends?

This is another area where unmarried partners can face unexpected consequences.

Marriage generally creates a reciprocal duty of support between spouses.

The Constitutional Court has confirmed that no equivalent duty of support automatically arises by operation of law merely because unmarried partners are cohabiting.

Therefore, an unmarried partner does not automatically acquire the same right to claim post-separation maintenance that may arise in the context of a divorce.

This is why the statement:

"We have lived together for years, so my partner

iis not necessarily correct.

But Every Case Must Be Considered on Its Own Facts

It is important not to make the position more absolute than it is.

The existence of an express agreement between the parties may create enforceable rights and obligations.

a appropriate circumstances, the conduct of the parties may also be relevant when determining whether a tacit agreement existed.

The precise legal basis of any claim must therefore be considered carefully.

The important principle is this: cohabitation alone does not automatically create the same maintenance rights and obligations that arise from marriage.

What About Maintenance for Children?

The position regarding children is entirely different.

A parent's duty to maintain his or her child does not depend on whether the parents were legally married.

Parents have a legal obligation to contribute towards the reasonable maintenance needs of their children according to their respective means.

Therefore, the fact that two parents never married does not mean that one parent can avoid responsibility for child maintenance.

It is important to distinguish between:

* maintenance for a former partner, and
* maintenance for a child.

The legal principles applicable to these two issues are not the same.

Can a Cohabitation Agreement Protect You?

Yes, and this is an important form of legal planning for unmarried couples.

A cohabitation agreement allows partners to record their intentions regarding financial matters during the relationship and what should happen if the relationship ends.

Depending on the circumstances, a cohabitation agreement may deal with issues such as:

* ownership of assets;
* household expenses;
* contributions towards property;
* responsibility for debts;
* jointly acquired assets;
* improvements made to property;
* financial arrangements between the parties; and
* the consequences of separation.

A properly drafted agreement can provide significantly more certainty than relying on verbal discussions or assumptions.

Why Couples Should Discuss Finances Before There Is a Problem

Nobody enters a happy relationship expecting it to end in a legal dispute.

For that reason, couples often avoid conversations about money and property.

They may say:

"We trust each other."

Or:

"We will work it out if something happens."

Unfortunately, relationships can change, and memories can differ.

Years later, the parties may disagree about:

* who paid for renovations;
* whether money was a gift or a loan;
* whether one partner was promised an interest in a property;
* who contributed towards the household;
* whether the parties intended to share their assets; and
* what was agreed at the beginning of the relationship.

By the time the dispute reaches an attorney, the evidence may be incomplete and the parties may have very different versions of the past.

A written agreement cannot prevent every dispute, but it can provide clarity.

Buying a Property Together? Do Not Leave Important Questions Unanswered

Living Together Does Not Mean You Are Married: Understanding Cohabitation in South African Law

Unmarried couples who purchase property together should obtain advice before signing documentation.

Important questions include:

* In whose name will the property be registered?
* Will both parties be registered as owners?
* If so, what share will each party own?
* Who will pay the deposit?
* Who will be responsible for the bond?
* What happens if one party contributes more than the other?
* Who will pay for renovations and maintenance?
* What happens if the relationship ends?
* Can one party buy the other out?

Do not assume that making monthly payments towards a property automatically gives you legal ownership of that property.

Financial contribution and registered ownership are not always the same thing.

It is far easier to address these issues before a dispute arises than after the relationship has broken down.

Do Not Forget About Estate Planning

Separation is not the only event that can expose the legal vulnerability of an unmarried partner.

What happens if one partner dies?

Unmarried partners should not simply assume that they will automatically receive the same inheritance or maintenance protection that may apply to a surviving spouse.

The Constitutional Court's decision in Volks NO v Robinson illustrates the importance of understanding the distinction between the legal consequences of marriage and those of an unmarried cohabiting relationship.

For this reason, estate planning is particularly important for unmarried couples.

Couples should consider obtaining advice regarding:

* wills;
* beneficiary nominations;
* life insurance;
* retirement benefits;
* ownership of jointly held assets; and
* financial provision for a surviving partner and children.

A person may have spent decades building a life with a partner while still having no clear understanding of what will happen if one of them dies.

That uncertainty can often be reduced through proper planning.

Cohabitation Is a Personal Choice—But It Should Be an Informed One

There is nothing inherently wrong with choosing to live together without getting married.

People make that choice for many different personal, practical and financial reasons.

The problem arises when people make the choice without understanding its legal consequences.

Choosing not to marry means that the automatic legal framework associated with marriage may not apply.

That makes planning particularly important.

Before moving in together—or even if you have already lived together for many years—it is worth asking:

* Who owns what?
* How will we share household expenses?
* What happens to assets acquired during the relationship?
* What happens if one partner contributes to property owned by the other?
* Have we agreed on our financial responsibilities?
* What happens if the relationship ends?
* Should we enter into a cohabitation agreement?
* Do we each have a valid will?

These questions may not be romantic, but they are practical.

And practical planning can prevent significant conflict later.

The Bottom Line

Living together does not automatically mean that you are married in the eyes of the law.

Simply sharing a home, finances and a life does not automatically create:

* a marriage;
* a joint estate;
* a right to half of your partner's assets; or
* an automatic right to post-separation maintenance.

That does not mean that an unmarried partner can never have a legal claim.

Depending on the facts, there may be contractual remedies, claims relating to particular assets or, in appropriate circumstances, a universal partnership claim.

However, these rights are not automatic.

The outcome will depend on the legal basis of the claim and the evidence available.

Living Together Does Not Mean You Are Married: Understanding Cohabitation in South African Law

The Most Important Lesson

Do not wait until the relationship ends to discover what your legal rights are.

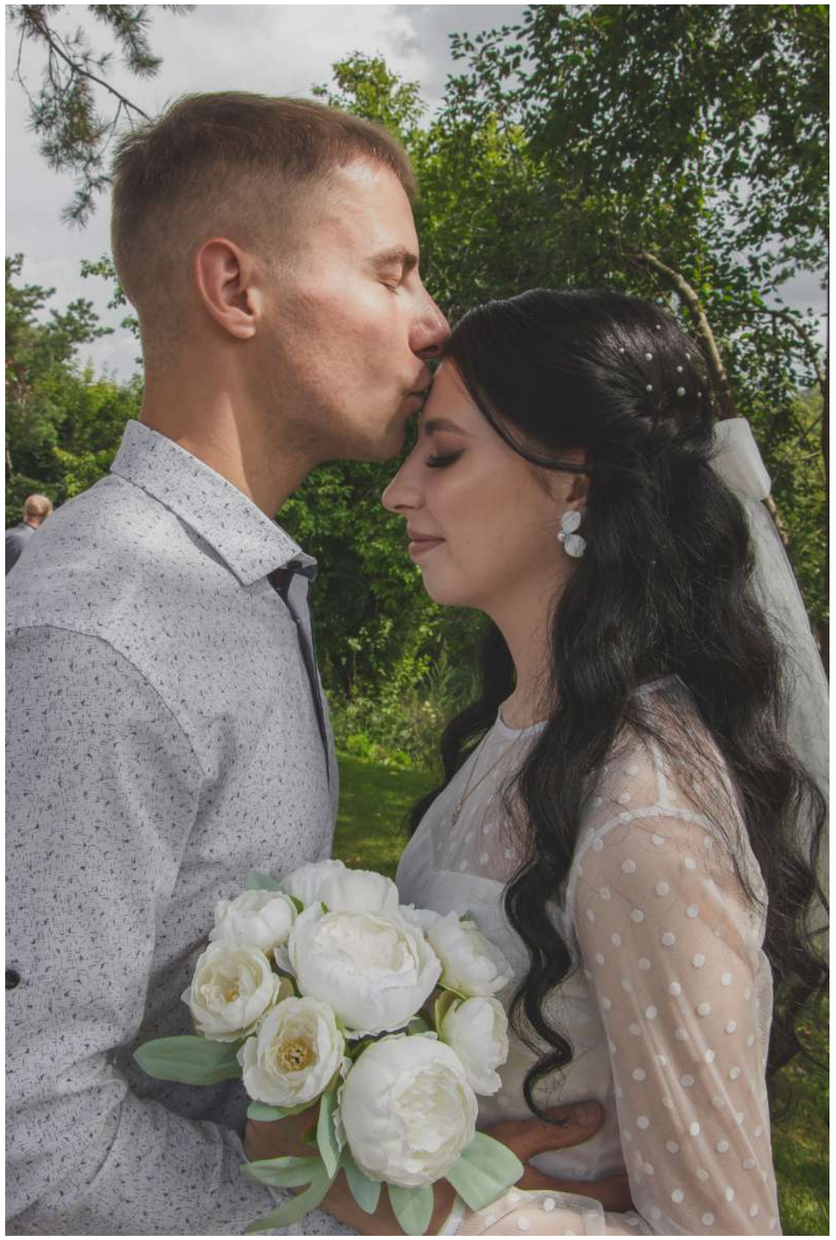
A cohabitation agreement is not necessarily a sign that you expect the relationship to fail.

It can simply be a sensible way for two people to record their financial intentions and protect themselves against uncertainty.

Love may bring two people together. The law, however, does not automatically treat every committed relationship as a marriage.

If you are living with a partner—or planning to do so—obtaining proper legal advice now may prevent significant financial and legal difficulties in the future.

This article is intended for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. The legal position will depend on the specific facts of each matter. Professional legal advice should be obtained before taking action based on the information contained in this article.





When Trauma lives in the Body

When Trauma Lives in the Body: Can We Heal and Become Ourselves Again?

Trauma is something we often think of as an emotional wound. We imagine the memories, the sadness, the fear and the anxiety that can follow a painful experience. But trauma can also live in the body.

Sometimes, long after the event has passed, the body still behaves as though the danger is present.
You may find yourself constantly tense, easily startled, struggling to sleep, feeling exhausted, having difficulty concentrating, or finding it hard to relax.

You may feel numb or disconnected from yourself. You may even wonder, "Why am I still feeling like this? The event is over. Why can't I just move on?"
The answer is that trauma is not simply something we can tell ourselves to forget.

What happens to the body after trauma?
When we experience something frightening or overwhelming, our nervous system can go into survival mode. Our body prepares to protect us through its natural fight, flight, freeze or other survival responses.
For some people, that response settles once they are safe again. For others, the nervous system can remain sensitive long after the danger has passed.
This doesn't mean that you are weak, broken or "going crazy."

It means your body may still be trying to protect you.
Can I get rid of trauma by myself?
There are things you can do to support your body and nervous system, and these can become an important part of healing. But you don't have to—and shouldn't feel that you have to—heal everything alone.

Simple grounding techniques can help you reconnect with the present moment. Try slowing your breathing, particularly by making your exhale a little longer than your inhale. Look around you and name things you can see, hear and

touch. Put your feet firmly on the floor and remind yourself:

"I am here. I am safe in this moment. What happened is not happening right now."
Gentle movement, walking, stretching, regular sleep, nourishing food, time in nature and being around people you trust can also help create a sense of safety.
These techniques don't magically erase trauma. They can, however, help your body learn that it is possible to feel safe again.
Don't be afraid to ask for help
One of the strongest things you can do is say, "I need help."
A psychologist, counsellor, psychiatrist or other appropriately trained mental-health professional can help you understand what you are experiencing and work through it safely. Trauma-focused therapies, including trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy and EMDR, are among the approaches used to help people process traumatic experiences.
Asking for help doesn't mean you have failed.
It means you have decided that your healing matters.
Will I ever be myself again?
This is perhaps one of the biggest questions after trauma.
"Will I ever feel like me again?"
The answer can be yes—but healing doesn't always mean becoming exactly the person you were before.
Trauma can change us. But change doesn't have to mean losing ourselves forever.
With time, support and appropriate treatment, many people learn to feel safe again, reconnect with their emotions, rebuild relationships and regain confidence in their bodies and themselves.

You may discover that healing is not about forgetting what happened. It is about reaching a point where what happened to you is part of your story, but it no longer controls your entire story.

Healing takes time
There is no stopwatch on healing.
Some days you may feel strong. Other days, something small may bring back an unexpected emotion or memory.

That doesn't necessarily mean you are going backwards.
Healing isn't always a straight line.
Be patient with yourself.
Your body has spent time learning how to survive. It may need time to learn that it is safe to live again.

And perhaps the most important thing to remember is this:

You are not your trauma.
You are the person who survived it.
You are still here.

And with the right support, patience and compassion for yourself, there can be life, laughter, peace and a sense of yourself beyond what happened.
A final thought
Sometimes we spend years asking, "Why can't I just get over it?"
Perhaps the better question is:
"What does my body need to feel safe enough to heal?"

That question can be the beginning of a very different journey.



MAGAZINE



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