

Seven Financial Discussions That Can Safeguard Your Marriage Before You Walk Down the Aisle

One of the top five issues couples fight about is M-O-N-E-Y. In fact, according to a recent survey by the Institute for Divorce Financial Analysts, money is the third leading marriage killer, coming in just slightly behind infidelity.

But when you're planning your white wedding, sometimes it's hard to remember to think about the green. That's why it's important to have a thorough money symposium BEFORE you walk down the aisle.

Topics for consideration include:

- 1.) **The Past is Never Past.** We don't know where we're going until we have a clear idea of where we've been. Discuss the financial habits (both good and bad) that your parents practiced and how that may have shaped your current relationship with money. It's also important to talk about your *emotional* connection to money. Does he practice retail therapy while you find comfort in watching your savings grow?
- 2.) **Let's Talk About Debt Baby.** Debt can be one of the most difficult topics for couples to discuss, but it's one of the most vital to be frank about. Student loans, credit cards, car payments, low credit scores – both partners should have a clear understanding of what is owed and what the plan is to address it.
- 3.) **Pre-nup is Not a Dirty Word.** Divorce is the farthest thing from your mind when you're planning a wedding, and even addressing the topic can feel like a sign of bad faith. But making a pre-nuptial agreement now, when both parties are thinking clearly, can be vital to securing your financial future. They can be especially valuable for protecting individual interests and assets in second marriages with blended families.
- 4.) **Setting the Goal Posts.** Give some thought as to what things are most important to you, both individually and as a couple, and what steps you need to take to achieve them. Kids, a bigger house, world travel, early retirement, starting your own business – it's vital that you both have a clear idea of where you're headed.
- 5.) **Building a Better Budget.** Once you have a complete picture of the plan, then you can work together to develop a budget and spending plan that reflects your joint financial goals. There will likely be areas on which you disagree, so consider allocating each partner a specific amount each month to do with as they please, no questions asked.
- 6.) **Taxing Situations.** Joining lives can have significant tax implications depending on your income, assets, and where you live. Consult a CPA or tax attorney to determine if you should file jointly or separately, and how to handle claiming dependents.
- 7.) **Hope for the Best, But Expect the Worst.** Discuss who you want making financial and medical decisions should you be unable to do so. For older couples considering a second marriage, make sure to consider how tying the knot will affect the inheritance each partner plans to leave their children.