

Money Matters in Marriage

If you asked a group of married couples what it takes to make a marriage work, you would probably not get an overwhelming chorus on the benefits of finding a financial soul mate. Most couples enjoy marital bliss because they have found someone they love and who shares their attitude to life. But like it or not, financial matters play a big part in the dynamic of all relationships.

The trouble with money in marriage is often not the money. Well at least not at first. The main obstacle is learning how to talk about your finances in an honest, no holds barred way.

In fact, when we conducted an unscientific poll recently with a dozen married colleagues at work, they all admitted that it took a while for the money talk to get started, for them to get comfortable discussing it and to realize that it was necessary.

Working through the discomfort of discussing the financial aspects of marriage often proves to be one of the hardest psychological barriers to overcome in an intimate relationship.

Being honest about money, making choices and committing to financial goals are some of the most important ways of preserving the pleasure of being married.

Many of the arguments between couples over money are code for how each partner wants to live their lives. After all, how we want to live our lives affects the decisions we make on how to spend our money.

Making decisions as a team is critical in preserving the marital pot of gold. Marriage is a financial union and managing the finances could prove to be your most valuable asset – or your largest liability.

Not everyone will find perfect financial compatibility. The key is to find a middle ground. Discussing how you can make financial decisions together and revisiting your plans periodically can be likened to feeding the dog and putting the toilet seat down. You need to be committed and considerate.

Marriage has a tendency to bring together people who are polar opposites. If the cliché holds, savers typically marry spenders and within marriages, there is typically a free spirit and a conservative. It is necessary to learn, understand and work towards some kind of middle ground in managing the family finances, particularly when your mate is your financial opposite in attitude and behavior.

Typically, attitude and behavior take time to change. And it is precisely financial behavior that is tracked over time in today's consumer credit market. Gone are the days of seemingly free credit and financing from lending institutions.

Understanding your level of debt and building your financial reputation is no longer a solo act. When entering into a financial union, you will need to be honest and act as a team.

At the heart of the marriage, you're looking for a soul mate as much as a financial mate. Down the track you may have a couple of college bound kids, worries over your retirement, a mortgage to pay and the need for a new family car all competing for your limited resources. So planning your finances from the start of your marriage is a necessary step.

Key Money Considerations in Marriage

1. Talk and share your goals

When considering marriage, share your life and savings goals with your partner. Ask the tough questions and agree on your spending and savings strategy from the start. Revisit these strategies regularly as circumstances do change over the course of a marriage.

2. Run your personal finances like your business

Keep a budget to track your earnings, finances and debts over time. If you structure your personal relationship like a business partnership, it allows you to share financial responsibilities and make big life decisions together.

3. Maintain some independence

Consolidating your financial resources is important but you also need to enjoy a certain degree of independence. So while you make plans together, have a personal pool of savings which you can turn to.

4. Check your personal credit report regularly

It is critical to frequently check both partners' personal credit bureau reports to ensure your information and payment patterns have been regularly and correctly reported by lending institutions. Take the time to learn how banks review credit report when they decisions on whether or not to lend you money. Remember, when you apply for credit together both your personal credit reports will be reviewed jointly.

Article contributed by Singapore consumer credit bureau - DP Credit Bureau.

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