

## **Keeping the Lid On Financial Stress - Part IV**

Talk to your partner or spouse about money, now!

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You hear it all the time, the three big things couples fight most about, the kids, the in-laws and MONEY. In fact, a survey of 1,022 American adults conducted by Opinion Research Group found that the two situations that put the most stress on a relationship, tied at 30% each, are problems with in-laws and problems paying the bills.

And guess what came out higher than sexual compatibility for personal traits that are most important in long term relationships: FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY!

Fighting over money is a fairly common fight and usually there's a failure to communicate. People aren't on the same page or spreadsheet as it were. You'd think it would be fairly easy to talk about money, but lurking beneath the surface are things like fear, resentment, power and control. Add family and cultural differences and different spending styles to the mix and it's no wonder people are screaming at each other about how much the grocery bill is!

So what's a couple to do? Here are some suggestions I gathered from several articles:

1. Watch how you're talking. Both of you need to agree to remain calm and to listen to each other. Use "I feel" statements instead of "You" statements, which are accusatory.
2. Take a hike or a walk. Or pick a spot that's comfortable and make's it easy to talk.
3. Understand where each other is coming from. Take some time to tell your partner how your family handled money growing up. What are some of the attitudes you've gotten about money from your family or cultural background.
4. Be open. Never assume your way is the only way. Be respectful, the point here is to take the best from both sides and create a brand new style that works for you as a couple.
5. Establish common goals. Don't assume you have the same goals for the big ticket items: buying a house, saving for college and retirement. Discuss these and agree on a plan.
6. Quantify your goals. Do this for the big items and also for the smaller ones, like taking a vacation, buying a car and other capital expenses for your household.
7. Switch roles every six months or so - doing the bills, watching your investments, shopping for the house. This puts yourself in the other's shoes and you'll both have a more complete picture.
8. Don't begrudge small indulgences the other makes. But agree to consult each other on large purchases. Decide up front what the dollar amount is for those large items.
9. Don't keep money secrets and never criticize your partner about money in front of others. In fact, that's a good policy to keep about other things as well.
10. If you need help, get it. And don't delay. Solutions EAP is a great place to start. There are plenty of resources available (see the previous sections in the attached handout), but do take action ASAP.

**Call Solutions EAP at 1-800-526-3485 for assistance for all of life's challenges.**

**It's free, confidential and open to your family members.**

**Check us out on-line at [www.solutions-eap.com](http://www.solutions-eap.com)**