

# Practicing Financially Safe Marriage

Contributed by Helga Hayse  
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It's not just first time brides who have trouble talking about money. Women who remarry have many of the same money hang-ups, especially if money was a touchy subject the first time around.

It's counterintuitive to think about widowhood or divorce when you're getting married. Few women do. Without thinking of the consequences of letting our husband manage our money, we set ourselves up for financial vulnerability. We assume he's making the right financial decisions about our future. Sometimes he is; sometimes he isn't. Most of the time, he's not thinking of our future without him.

Unfortunately, if we're not participating in the marital finances, we don't find out what he's been doing until we are slammed with a crisis of widowhood or divorce.

Why don't women participate more fully in marital finances and make sure they're protected? Theoretically, it should be as easy to talk about money as it is to talk about anything else with our fiancé or husband. We consider ourselves to be independent adults whose thoughts and emotions about money are our own.

The problem with talking about money is that it's rarely just about money. It's about our assumptions, expectations, memories, history, attitudes and money styles, all of which represent a whole range of other emotions.

Money, like electricity or water, is a form of energy that we use to make other things happen. If we were logical about money, our reasoning would be to earn more, spend less, budget, save for emergencies or retirement, and keep an eye on the money so we know where it is.

That's what we would do if we started a business with a partner. We'd pay attention to all the financial details we'd need to run that business. We'd discuss the finances regularly with our partner, participate equally in financial decisions and feel we had a right to do that.

We don't pay attention to the business side of our marriage. But the government does. It looks at our marriage as a business with assets, liabilities, income, expenses, taxes and net worth. That's the part that could impact our future if our marriage ends.

Remember that going into marriage, it's all about love.

Coming out of marriage, either through divorce or death, it's all about money.

You can start protecting yourself from a financial blackout by asking yourself the following questions:

Do I understand my marital finances? (

What do I need financially to feel secure? (

How would I manage if I were widowed or divorced? (

Do I sign documents without understanding them? (

Do I know where all our financial records are?

These five questions will give you a head start on practicing financially safe marriage.

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Helga Hayse is author of "Don't Worry about a Thing, Dear"

- Why Women Need Financial intimacy. She teaches women about participating and understanding their marital finances. She speaks to financial planners and estate planners about how to encourage crucial conversations within families.

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