

Have you ever fought over money with your spouse? If so, you are not alone. Money is one of the leading sources of conflict in most marriages. However, the following tips can help you manage your money and marriage in a way that can strengthen your relationship rather than damage it.

**1. Learn the two basic laws of the money harvest.** First, if you spend MORE than you earn, then you reap financial stress. Second, if you spend LESS than you earn, then you reap financial peace.

Choose as a couple which law you are going to follow. Write down your choice and place it in your wallet or purse.

**2. Learn the basics of money management.** You can either learn about money mistakes ahead of time or you can learn about them as you make them. Invest as much time as you can educating yourself about managing money wisely. A good place to start is by reading the book *The Richest Man in Babylon* by George Clason.

**3. Get out of debt and stay out of debt.** Mitch Huhem said "I am willing to live my life like most people won't so I can live the rest of my life like most people can't." Most people choose to go into debt early in life so they can live like people later in life.

A better way is to sacrifice for a few years early in life. Invest the money from your sacrifices and only increase your standard of living by using the money your investments

produce. This path allows you to spend the rest of your life enjoying your lifestyle without financial stress.

It's never too late to make the changes that will help you get out of debt and stay out of debt. Start by paying off your debt with the highest interest rate. Once paid off, use the payment to start paying off your next highest debt. Continue this process until you're debt free.

**This debt reduction plan only works if you stay committed to spending LESS than you earn.**

**4. Track your spending.** In order to take control of your finances, you have to know how you are spending your money. You can either do this by hand or purchase a software program that can help you.

**5. Needs versus wants.** This area is the source of the most financial conflict in marriage. One spouse views a purchase as a need while the other spouse views the purchase as a want. Trying to convince each your spouse the perceived need is actually a want almost never works. Instead, ask your spouse to help you understand why he or she views the purchase as a need. When we feel understood, the likelihood we will be willing to compromise increases significantly.

In reality, there are very few needs and limitless wants. A need is the most BASIC purchase that will keep you alive. EVERYTHING else falls into the want category. While meeting your BASIC needs will keep you alive, spending

money wisely on AFFORDABLE wants can make life easier and more enjoyable.

**6. Create a Monthly Financial Freedom Plan.** 1. Start by writing down how much money you bring home each month. 2. Subtract 10% of that amount and place it in your retirement and rainy day accounts. Your rainy day savings account should only be used to replace money that you normally earn, but due to job loss, illness, etc. are no longer receiving. You should build up a minimum of a three month rainy day savings account. 3. Subtract the amount to meet your BASIC needs for that month. 4. Subtract the amount you need to set aside each month to meet future unexpected expenses, such as car repairs, home repairs, medical expenses, etc. 5. Subtract the amount you have both agreed on for debt reduction. 6. Subtract the amount of the AFFORDABLE wants you both agree on. 7. You and your spouse will rarely agree 100% of the time on how money should be used. Address these differences by dividing the remaining amount of money in half. This represents the discretionary money you can each manage as you individually see fit.

Your spouse will make mistakes with his or her half of the discretionary money, but so will you. By using this budget method, the mistakes you both make will be ones you can pay for in one month rather than many years.

You may need to adjust your plan for the first few months, but you will soon be able to accurately estimate the amount of money that should go in each category.

**7. Strengthen Your Financial Willpower Muscles.** Most of us have already been taught these principles but have found it difficult to live these principles. The key to living these principles is to strengthen your financial willpower muscles. Like any weight training program, these principles will be difficult and uncomfortable at first. Over time these principles will become easier to stick with and can help you achieve your financial goals. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “That which you persist in doing becomes easier to do. Not that the nature of the thing itself has changed, but that your ability to do it has increased.”

By using these tips you can significantly decrease the amount of marital conflict you experience over money and significantly increase your financial peace of mind.

### Action Plan

After both you and your spouse have read this pamphlet, sit down together as a couple and write down the specific steps you will take to implement these seven tips.

Visit [HealthyMarriage.org](http://HealthyMarriage.org) to read the other topics in this pamphlet series.



## We Need Your Help

**Background:** 95% of married couples are either satisfied or very satisfied with their marital relationship. The unhappy 5% will either cycle back into the 95% group or get divorced. At some point almost all marriages will transition into the unhappy 5%, but most move back into the 95% group over time.

**Problem:** As long as a couple is satisfied with their marital relationship they aren't likely to seek out the tools that can prevent them from entering the unhappy group. However, we have found that when people read about these tools, over 90% will implement what they learn and most will teach the information to others.

**Solution:** Please help get these pamphlets into the hands of couples in every way you can think of. Together, we can help more children, women and men access the positive social outcomes associated with healthy marriages.

# Marriage

Increase the  
Joy



# Money

A Key to Unlocking the Door to  
a Healthy and Happy Marriage