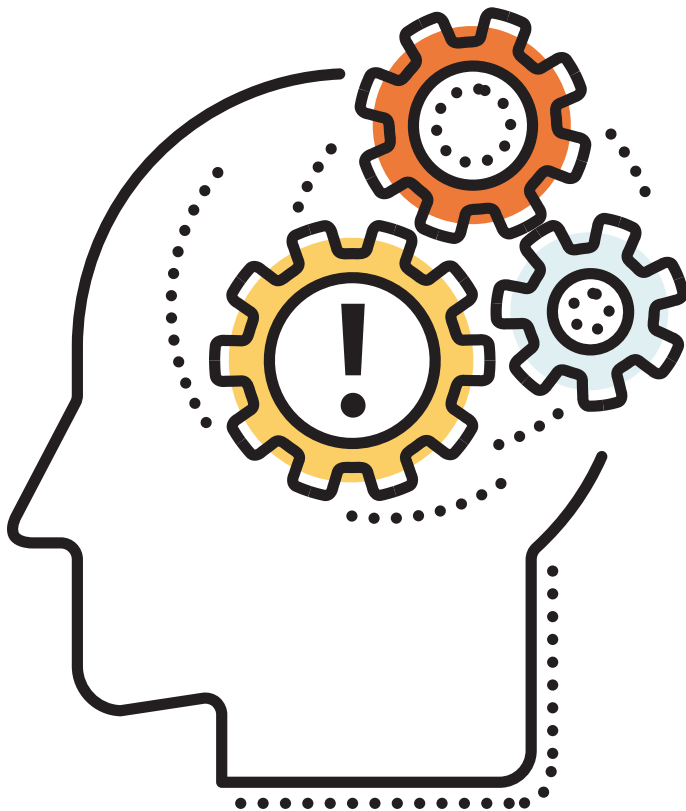


Five Tips to Help Couples Talk About Money

Money discussions can affect your relationship, especially if you put those talks off too long. You and your partner need to get on the same page and talk honestly—and regularly—about finances.

Researchers find that arguments about money often foretell divorce and are more intense than couples' fights over other subjects. When arguing about money, couples use harsher language with each other, and the arguments usually last longer.



Understand the Red Flags

Be aware of the signs that you and your partner need a financial conversation—and soon:

- You're uncomfortable about some aspect of your partner's financial life (student loans, credit card debt, lack of savings or planning for retirement).
- Your partner's money habits directly affect you, perhaps because of joint ownership of assets—or debts.
- You're considering getting married, living together, or combining finances in some way.

How to Have Effective Conversations

If you're unsure how to start, use these tips to keep your conversations positive:

Avoid scary words. No one wants to hear a partner say, "We need to talk." When someone says that to you, your guard immediately comes up because you assume something bad is coming.

Start with the positive. Bring up goals you want to achieve together and then discuss ways to reach those goals.

Don't unleash criticisms. If you have concerns or your partner struggles with a problem like debt, remember and admit your own financial faults—then ask for your partner's help finding a solution. This both paves the way to discuss other financial problems and shows that you don't want to start a fight or be antagonistic.

Goals and values. Start by talking about what you and your partner value. Think of open-ended questions like:

- What are your hopes and dreams?
- Which aspirations do you share and which are individual?
- What financial steps must you take to make each set of dreams come true?

Listen – and ask. Although you started the conversation, let your partner share their hopes, dreams and goals and then ask questions. Encourage your partner to ask questions as well.

By respectfully handling money questions and problems, you and your partner can strengthen your relationship and make it easier to deal with future financial matters.

