

5 Ways to Prevent Money from Ruining Your Relationship

It's hardly the best kept secret that money (and fights over money) may be the number one cause of marital discord and, sadly one of the leading causes of divorce. According to the Institute for Divorce Financial Analysis (yes, there is such an organization), money issues are responsible for nearly a quarter of all divorces, making it the third leading cause of failed marriages. But money doesn't have to ruin your relationship. In fact, noted financial adviser Dave Ramsey states, "You can't have a great relationship until you can communicate and agree about money." Here are five simple strategies you can apply to successfully tame your financial conflicts.

1. Communicate. Solid relationships that endure begin with trust and trust begins with open, honest communication. Oddly enough, even though couples these days can openly talk about some of the most sensitive subjects that would have made our ancestors blush—money still can be an awkward topic and in some cases there is complete silence on the subject.

A good place to start is by not hiding secrets. According to a poll by creditcards.com "about six million consumers in the U.S. have concealed financial accounts from spouses, partners or significant others they live with. Nearly one in five (18 %) say they've secretly spent more than \$500 without telling their spouse or partner. That kind of financial infidelity—hiding the existence of credit card, checking and savings accounts—can be just as troubling for relationships as secret romantic affairs, say credit counselors and financial experts. In fact, cheating with money damages trust and can potentially bring down the other partner's good credit name and history."

Learn how to talk about money. "Choosing to facilitate open and honest communication around money is the most important financial decision couples can make for a successful future," says Dr. Michael McNulty of the Chicago Relationship Center.

2. "Budget" is not a curse word. "There's no sexy way to say it: you need to have a household budget," says the financial magazine, *Forbes*. "It's the most effective way to keep



Have an emergency fund. The only certain thing about life is that it is filled with uncertain events.

track of your money." However a large majority of Americans do not prepare a budget. Only about "one in three Americans prepare a detailed written or computerized household budget each month that tracks their income and expenses," according to a Gallup poll.

"The good news is that technology has made budgeting a lot easier," *Forbes* reports. "One of the most popular programs, which many financial advisors applaud, is Mint—a program that lets you create a budget and automatically track your accounts and transactions so you can see how you're progressing. Mint also categorizes your purchases to give you a better idea of how you're spending your money. There are a lot of other great programs as well (in addition to numerous websites that review them) so it's worth looking into which program works best for you." Dave Ramsey's free EveryDollar app is a handy resource for tracking everyday expenditures on your smart phone.

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3. Have an emergency fund. The only certain thing about life is that it is filled with uncertain events. You lose your job, someone in the family gets sick, the transmission of your usually reliable car blows up or any of thousands of events can set you back financially. Christianwealth.com advises that “there is a simple solution: an ‘emergency fund’.” This simply means setting aside cash in a bank account for a rainy day. How much is appropriate? Whilst it will vary based on circumstances, a rough rule of thumb is six months of living expenses.”

4. Don't maintain separate accounts. Many couples keep separate checking or credit card accounts because they are reluctant to give up the control they had as a single person. But separate accounts provoke ongoing bickering about who is paying for what and inevitably lead to resentment about what is your fair share of the expenses and what is your partner's fair share. Separate accounts also circle back the problem we have already discussed: keeping secrets and “financial infidelity”.

5. The issues may not be about money at all. “A lot of the fights between spouses that seem as though they're about money aren't about [money] at all. It's actually a clash of temperaments,” says Matt Bell, associate editor at Soundmindinvesting.com and author of the book *Money and Marriage*. “Temperament is a huge potential source of conflict,” he says adding, “one person may be upset that their spouse is spending too much, but the issue may not be just that they can't afford it but may be something deeper, such as a real fear

of not being able to pay their bills some day.”

While disagreements about money can still happen for any couple from time to time, if you and your partner can put into practice these five concepts, you can dramatically reduce the conflicts over money.



Find A Word

P E N A C T S B B B
 T L O L O H G R L Q
 H B U U N A U A U M
 I A R M T T R A I Y
 N S S P E E D I N G
 D N T S M D R I V E
 E E R U P E R M I S
 R P I E O R R E T W
 A S K B R L O N E I
 G I E A A E C D D S

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|---------|
| Aroma | Dupes | Noise | Steps |
| Bales | Empty | Outer | Striker |
| Blare | Enacts | Permission | Sugar |
| Blocks | Hated | Plumed | Swish |
| Brutes | Hinder | Poetic | Tours |
| Cased | Indispensable | Product | Tubae |
| Clouts | Invited | Recede | Twitch |
| Contemporaries | Legislators | Reread | |
| Crude | Lumps | Resuscitate | |
| Demotes | Mended | Shore | |
| Drivels | Misuse | Speeding | |
| Drugs | Mount | Squad | |

For the puzzle solution go to cuddiganlaw.com/library/newsletter

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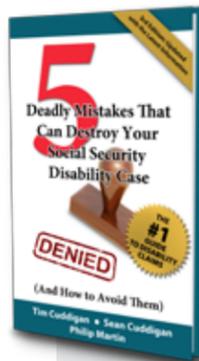


New Medicare Cards Are on the Way. Watch Out for Scams.

This month the government began sending out new Medicare cards to replace the old ones which were stamped with Social Security numbers (SSNs). The old cards were vulnerable to thieves who could use a stolen Medicare card to steal the cardholder's identity. The new cards replace the SSN with a new, randomly-generated 11-digit Medicare number.

But the scammers are not giving up. They are using several tricks to try to swindle the new Medicare numbers from unsuspecting Americans. Some criminals claim to represent Medicare and ask for a bank account number to arrange direct deposit of funds. In another con a phone caller will threaten to cancel a person's health insurance if they don't give out the number.

“We're telling people, don't ever give someone this number—just hang up,” said Nancy Ketcham, an Iowa elder rights specialist. Amy Nofziger, an AARP fraud expert, told the *Los Angeles Daily News* that “a Medicare representative will never contact [someone] by phone or email about the new cards and will certainly never ask for money or personal information or threaten to cancel your health benefits.”



“5 Deadly Mistakes That Can Destroy Your Social Security Disability Case” is the #1 guide to improving the odds of winning a disability case.

For a FREE copy for you or someone you care about call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com

Should You Participate in the VA's RAMP Claims Process?



Since November of 2017, the VA has been rolling out a new program intended to speed up the settlement of VA disability cases and reduce the backlog. It is called the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program, or RAMP.

Participation in RAMP is voluntary and is being first offered to vets with some of the oldest pending appeals in the VA's inventory. Over a period of time the VA will

be sending out notices to veterans eligible to participate in RAMP. If you have received a RAMP notice, here's what you need to know.

If you don't want to participate in RAMP, you can do nothing and the VA will continue to process your appeal in the legacy process. If you decide to participate in RAMP, simply complete and return the election form found in the notice.

With RAMP you must choose one of the two, new processing “lanes” – Higher-Level Review or Supplemental Claim Lane. Select the Higher Level Review option if you have no additional evidence to submit in support of your claim but you believe that there was an error in the initial decision. The Higher-Level Reviewer will only consider evidence that was in VA's possession at the time you opt-in. You or your representative will not be able to add new evidence if you are in the Higher Level Review lane. If you have additional evidence that is new and relevant to support your benefit claim, then you will want to select the Supplemental Claim Lane.

There are potential advantages and disadvantages in the RAMP program. The advantages of RAMP include potentially faster decisions; the option to ask for a quick, fresh look at the decision the VA made in evaluating your case; and multiple review options. However, you need to fully consider that participating in RAMP has some disadvantages, as well, including never being able to go back to the legacy appeals process, not being able to take your claim directly to the Board of Veterans Appeals, and if your claim is again denied during your RAMP participation, you will not be able to appeal to the Board until at least February 2019.

If you have received a RAMP notification and are unsure of what is your next best move, then call us at Cuddigan Law for a free evaluation of your case. And if you have applied for VA disability and were denied benefits, don't give up. We can also review your case to see if you have grounds to appeal the denial.

We're in your corner.

We value the confidence and trust you have placed with us in the past.

If you or a family member or a friend could use our help now or in the future, please pass along our name.

Cuddigan Law.

Disability law is all we do.



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Are you a disabled veteran?

Before you apply for VA disability benefits call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com for your FREE copy of our book *The Essential Guide to VA Disability Claims*.

