

Money a primary (but taboo) marriage problem

Q—Joe and I have been married for 26 years. We have a great family, wonderful friends and a beautiful house. The only thing we consistently argue about is money. Every month when our Visa bill arrives, Joe opens it and has a fit. While he claims I handle the money, he yells and claims every purchase. I never overspend, but his tantrum makes me feel angry and like a child. I love Joe, I'm committed to my marriage, but I'm frustrated.

A long with sex, in-laws and children, married couples rank money as one of their primary problems. While a source of chronic conflict, the subject is frequently veiled in secrecy. It may be surprising to discover that money is more of a taboo topic of conversation than is sex.

While courting, we're likely to share past sexual experiences and never mention money. Yet, we can't deny that money is at the base of marital and family life; a form of

energy, and a currency between partners. Indeed marriage forces each of us to become economically interdependent. Your question brings the topic out of the closet!

Most difficulties can represent conflicts from childhood and/or struggles for a balance of power in your marriage. First, as individuals, we may have very definite ideas about how money should be earned, managed and spent. Each can trigger frustration and an internal struggle. The struggle depends largely on how money was used in our family of origin and our personal reaction to the money messages we received.

For example, let's take the woman growing up in a family where dad expressed love through gifts of clothing, but showed little physical or verbal expression of affection. As an adult, this woman may rush out to buy herself clothing any time she feels depressed or unloved.

Second, whether inherited or earned, money represents power in a relationship. The amount one person earns in comparison with their partner's income establishes relative power. Ideally, partners strive to maintain a relationship where neither feels submissive or dominant, but instead respected as equals.

However, all too often, the spouse who

earns the most, controls the money and its decision-making power. Wanting equality but feeling powerless and angry, the other partner gets even. Revenge, conscious or unconscious, can be expressed in many ways such as withdrawing sexually, becoming ill, losing valuable items, or wrecking the family car.

Remember, financial compatibility does not come naturally. It is a difficult process that must be negotiated and renegotiated. Resolution requires self-awareness, a willingness to understand your partner, and honest communication. This is truly the "work" of a relationship.

No matter who earns the money, or which partner earns more, the spirit within the relationship can shift from one of competition to one of collaboration. While I can not offer a universal solution to the problem, I urge you to take a deep breath, put love in your heart, and talk to Joe.

Bloomfield Hills resident Anita Taylor is one of two therapists who alternate in writing this relationship column. She is a psychologist and certified Imago Relationship Therapist in Birmingham. Questions for her may be sent to: Anita Taylor, Suburban Life, The Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

How to submit wedding, engagement, anniversary announcements

Residents of the Birmingham-Bloomfield, West Bloomfield and Southfield areas should send engagement, wedding, anniversary or birth information, with or without photograph, to: Attn: Brides, The Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

Residents of the Troy and

Rochester areas should send information to The Eccentric, 400 Water Street, Suite 203, Rochester 48307.

Residents of the Farmington area should send information to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335.

Preprinted forms that outline the information needed for your engagement or wedding announcement are available at Observer & Eccentric offices.

For engagement announcements, please submit at least 45 days before the wedding.

Black and white, 5x7 photos are preferred, but color photos and other sizes will be accepted.

If you have questions regarding your announcement, call Sue Willis in Birmingham at (248) 901-2500; Debbie Douglas in Rochester at (248) 651-7575, or Katie McManus in Farmington at (248) 477-5450.

WEDDINGS AND ENGAGEMENTS



Seelinger-Szczepanik

Kimberly Ann Szczepanik and Wallace Bradley Seelinger were married Oct. 3 at St. Stanislaus Catholic Church in Bay City.

The bride is the daughter of Mr. Wm. Szczepanik of Saginaw Township and Mrs. Darlene Kalahar of Bay City.

The groom is the son of Mrs. Carol Peters of Bay City and Mr. John Seelinger of Grand Rapids.

A reception was held at Ashman Court in Midland. The newlyweds honeymooned on a cruise through the Mediterranean and the Greek Islands. They are making their home in White Lake.



Chrostek-Sowers

Mr. and Mrs. David Chrostek of Birmingham announce the engagement of their daughter, Karin Joy, to David Christopher Sowers, son of John and Terri Sowers of Hidalgo, Ill.

The bride-to-be is a graduate of Seaholm High School and is attending Michigan State University.

Her fiancé is a graduate of the University of Illinois and will be commissioned as an officer in the Navy State Navy whereupon he will report to flight school.

A June wedding is planned.

Fletcher 50th

Mr. and Mrs. Zane R. Fletcher of Daleville, Ind. will celebrate their 50th anniversary on Nov. 27 in Rochester, with their son, Cary E. Fletcher, family and friends.



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