



NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR
CREDIT COUNSELING

*Knowing the difference can
make all the difference.*

NFCC PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 9, 2009

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LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

Antidotes for when Cupid's Bite Has a Financial Sting

Silver Spring, MD – Love is in the air, but nothing breaks Cupid's bow like an argument over money. And considering today's economic environment with job losses skyrocketing and portfolios tanking, there's a lot of stress surrounding money at home.

Money problems can start even before the "I do's" are pronounced. During the courtship phase of a relationship, the sky's the limit. Going into debt to pay for candy, flowers and meals at the finest restaurants seems worth it. As things progress, so does the price-tag, culminating with an engagement ring, elaborate wedding ceremony, and a honeymoon to an exotic island. Life is good, at least until the bills start arriving.

The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) recommends that this Valentine's Day couples should give each other the gift of financial openness. Take a deep breath and have a serious conversation surrounding money. "The fact of the matter is that people bring financial baggage into a relationship, and often don't deal with it until problems arise. Perhaps that baggage comes in the form of a poor credit rating, significant debt, or no experience managing money. Regardless of the issue, the time to address money differences is up front, before the financial bottom falls out" said Gail Cunningham, spokesperson for the NFCC.

The NFCC recommends the following Do's and Don'ts of that much-needed financial conversation:

- **Do** be honest about your current financial situation. If things have gone south, continuing the same lifestyle that was possible before the loss of income is simply unrealistic.
- **Do** be open to changing your lifestyle. If spending cutbacks or second jobs are necessary, resist whining. It's likely that your situation will be temporary, and you could end up regretting the pity party you hosted.
- **Don't** approach the subject in the heat of battle. Instead, set aside a time that is convenient and non-threatening for both parties.
- **Do** make it a casual conversation about a serious subject, respecting the fact that each person has valid opinions and concerns
- **Do** probe to understand long-held financial attitudes, often present since childhood and ingrained by observing how parents addressed money issues.
- **Do** acknowledge that one may be a saver and one a spender, understanding that there are benefits to both and agreeing to learn from each other's tendencies.

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- **Don't** hide income or debt. This is known as financial infidelity. Instead, bring financial documents, including a recent credit report, pay stubs, bank statements, insurance policies, debts and investments to the table.
- **Don't** point the finger of blame. That's a real conversation stopper.
- **Do** make a plan to deal with any skeletons that come out of the financial closet. Such surprises can greatly compromise your ability to obtain future credit opportunities. Now is the time to deal with them.
- **Do** discuss any legal documents you need to establish or change, such as a will.
- **Do** construct a joint budget that includes savings. In tough times when every cent counts, savings is even more critical.
- **Do** decide which person will be responsible for paying the monthly bills. It is likely that one person will be a good fit for this task, while the other finds it burdensome.
- **Do** allow each person to have independence by setting aside money to be spent at his or her discretion.
- **Do** decide upon short-term and long-term goals. It's ok to have individual goals, but you should have family goals, too.
- **Do** talk about loaning money to family members and friends. Decide if it's something you're each comfortable with, or should be taboo.
- **Do** talk about caring for your parents as they age, and how to appropriately plan for their financial needs, if necessary.

Court records show that financial stress is one of the main causes of divorce. Taking action now could prevent a disaster later.

For professional assistance bringing two incomes, two lifestyles and two financial attitudes together, or for help in working through financial problems that have never been addressed, consider an appointment with a certified consumer credit counselor at an NFCC Member Agency. To find the agency closest to you, call (800) 388-2227 (en Espanol call (800) 682-9832), or go online to www.DebtAdvice.org.

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The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC), founded in 1951, is the nation's largest and longest serving national nonprofit credit counseling organization. The NFCC's mission is to promote the national agenda for financially responsible behavior and build capacity for its members to deliver the highest quality financial education and counseling services. NFCC members annually help close to three million consumers through 850 community-based offices nationwide. For free and affordable confidential advice through a reputable NFCC member, call 1-800-388-2227, (en Español 1-800-682-9832) or visit www.nfcc.org.