

Luis Cruz, Alex Gouttsoul, Germán López

Instructor: Shannon Castleton

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Why do People Divorce: How financial issues became the number one cause of divorce

By all means marry. If you get a good wife, you'll be happy. If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher. -- Socrates

Family is the foundation of each society. What happens with a building if it's foundation begging to disappear. The statistics speak by themselves, according to Department of Health and Human Services, during 2001 the number of divorces in the United States was around eleven million, 89 % of those came from financial issues, these number show the size of the current situation. Some people still believe that divorce itself is not a real problem but a result of modern life style, unfortunately this believe is wrong, as Azrin, Naster and Jones show in their study:

Crime and delinquency is greater for children who are products of unhappy or broken homes. Alcoholism is more frequent among the separated. About one-half of first admissions to state mental hospitals result from marital stress as the single major precipitation

condition [...], marital disharmony is a pervasive social problem.

(365)

Divorce is a social trouble that had been analyzed during several years by diverse number of scholars, due to the huge family and finally social implications. One of the current causes of divorces is the financial difficulties that some couples face when they start a new relationship, some times they don't have an answer to the simple question; who is going to manage the money in our marriage?. We ask ourselves what we can do to address this situation, so the purpose of this paper is to understand the financial aspect of divorce and illustrate some alternatives to avoid that situation.

Of all the promises you will make on your wedding day, the "for richer or for poorer" bit is likely to cause the most problems. According to a survey by the Association of Bridal Consultants, financial counselors, banks and divorce lawyers, even after the first year, the most serious conflict in married life is over money. "Money is the leading cause of all divorces" says Valerie Phillips, Deseret News staff writer, in her article "Cents and Sensibility". Most people would agree that money is not what makes a good marriage, but it is certainly a big factor in making a bad one. People in love rarely talk about money, and these attitudes are not unusual. Couples never talk about who will pay the bills when they move together, or how much they will make. Everyone has different attitudes about money: some love it for what money can buy; others see it as the source of security. The myth of romantic love tells us we will meet someone, get married and live happily ever after. Nothing in the fairy stories tells us how to discuss our finances. We share our goals with each other: talk about career, how many children we will have, house we will live in; however we fail to plan how we will achieve our goals.

Women are often not allowed to take charge of money or financial decisions. Couples fail to claim both responsibilities and they half of the decision-making power. Many married couples freely accept lines of credit and loans banks and stores offered and then spends too much on furniture, cars, and other products. They want what everyone else has, and right now. Instead of earning the money and gradually acquiring possessions, credit cards come very handy in rush decisions. “There is little evidence pointing to financial difficulties as being a major factor in the breakup of marriages” mentions Liz Pulliam Weston in her article posted on Internet. Debt puts couples under stress and pressure, causing fights and bitterness witch make life harder, or may be they like to challenge themselves? Even challenge is good to the certain point.

Families can not function properly if money dilemma creates an argument. Some of us are young and careless, living the life away with credit cards and loans, some financially illiterate. When creating a family we start our life over: building intrapersonal and interpersonal trust, creating a partnership, learn to make personal commitments. Somewhere down the road we loose or never develop these skills, and most often money is the trigger to show our weakness to create the argument over which we can not find stamina to save relations. Jeffrey Zalow aggresses with that in the article “Stock market and drop is sinking families” in Wall Street Journal. “That conversation is everywhere now - at family dinner tables, in marital therapists’ offices, in divorce-mediation sessions, in visits with the in-law’s”. We can not be control freaks when family is to rescue. Unilateral decisions are not likely to help resolve family argument. Unwillingly we associate money and control, and pride is not helpful. Why do we let money divorce us? Is the need to control greater than the desire for loving and sympathetic relationship?

Is important not only to see the causes and effects of the bad financial management in the family, but some of the possible solutions to this problem.

Alfred Glossbrenner, an expert in financial management said:

Every one likes to spend money. But few of us like to spend the time and effort needed to get - and keep - our personal finances in order, even though doing so would almost certainly help have more money to spend. Often, a lot of more.(247)

Certainly, family and personal finances is not given; it doesn't happen automatically. Regardless how much the couple earn, they need to take control, but how do it?

Well we learn that spend time planning, is one of the keys. Is important to learn how manage the money before it manages you.

Marvin J. Ashton wrote a book called "One for the Money" in that book he states that:

Financial peace of mind is not determined by how much the couple makes, but is dependent how much they spend.

New attitudes and relationships towards money, should be developed constantly by all couples.(2)

Something important to remark is that management of family finances should be mutual between husband and wife in an attitude of openness and trust.

Other key is : "Learn Self-Discipline and Self-restraint in Money Matters". Learn how to discipline yourself and exercise constraint where money is concerned can be more

important than courses in accounting. We live in a materialistic society. Advertisement and easy way to get credits, entice young marriages to get in debts to easy and fast.

For example, the author Glossbrener explains the Expense-Reduction Game, which consist of following: once you got your list of expenses, consider each one and ask yourself if there is a way to reduce it. Certainly, we need to realize what are the "needs" against the "wants".

A Family budget is a good predetermined understanding of how much money will be available each month and the amount to be spent in each category of the family budget.

Some authors suggest a planner for planning the family budget (even Microsoft offers this program by Internet)

Another important thing is about Credit Cards. It is very important to limit use of credit cards and understand necessity of paying off.

Maybe the only debt that is reasonable is the purchase of the house, but even though this is justifiable, is important to know how much house can a couple afford? According to specialist, the average house cost must be 2.5 the worth of the couple's year income.

Finally, is important to consider the insurance programs and evaluate the options, and the investment and saving instruments the couple has.

This topic is not impossible to manage, it is a question of time and attitude. It is question of desire and going towards a planning program the couple determine by themselves according to their real needs and possibilities.

All the information that different sources provide along this article demonstrates the current outcome of marital financial problems. The young couples faces a lot of

changes when they start a new relationship and unfortunately the financial planning is not the first nor the second priority but, sometimes, is not consider at all. For some new families sorrow and disappointment resulted when the groom and the bride dreams collided with the reality. The dream becomes a nightmare that mainly hurt children and society.

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