



EVERYDAY WEALTH, EVERYDAY INSIGHTS

---

# LOVE, MONEY, AND THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATION

---

# EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF RELATIONSHIPS AND MONEY

It's no secret that marriage and other committed relationships require significant work. While each partner arrives with their own belief system, behavioral patterns, and expectations in place, they must recognize when differences exist and learn how to compromise and find common ground as they grow together.

For many couples, tough conversations can begin around finances and the various questions that come up: Is one spouse a diligent saver or a carefree spender? How did each partner's upbringing influence their approach to money? Who has the desire - or ego - to control the budget? Do both parties agree on the big financial decisions in life, such as raising a family or plans for retirement?

In the [Everyday Wealth in America 2022 Report: The Intersection of Life and Money](#)<sup>1</sup> Edelman Financial Engines explored the attitudes and perceptions that are often at play when couples navigate financial issues *together*, and how these can make or break a relationship. While disagreements about money are a leading cause of conflict and divorce, some people manage to avoid the pitfalls of financial discord. Our research reinforced that couples who are open, honest, and willing to communicate with each other are more likely to maintain a healthy and happy relationship. Working with a trusted financial professional also helps in this process.

The following brief includes several key findings from the report, along with insights from Edelman Financial Engines wealth planners on how to manage these crucial conversations.

1. *The Everyday Wealth in America* research was conducted for Edelman Financial Engines by Greenwald Research. Information was gathered through an online survey of 2,011 Americans who were at least 30 years old, from Aug. 30 to Sept. 7, 2022. The total sample included an oversample of 1,003 "affluent" respondents between the ages of 45-70, with household assets between \$500K-\$3M, and currently working with a financial professional or open to doing so. Data was weighted to correct for the affluent oversample and was also weighted by household assets, age, gender, race, and education to reflect the broader national population. If randomly conducted, the survey would have a margin of error (at the 95% confidence level) of plus or minus 2 percentage points.



“ One of the most stressful conversations any couple can have involves their family finances. It is completely natural – and expected – to have differences of opinion. One partner might view a certain expense as a necessity, and the other might view it as a luxury. One of the best ways to work through these differences is to bring an objective financial advisor into the discussion, sort of like a ‘referee.’ An advisor can strip away the emotional aspects of a situation and approach the problem like a mathematician. ”

**CLAY ERNST**

PLANNER  
EDELMAN FINANCIAL ENGINES

---

# MANY COUPLES DON'T TALK ENOUGH ABOUT THEIR FINANCES

Maintaining privacy, avoiding uncomfortable conflict, or simply not knowing how to start a money conversation are just several reasons why partners don't share their financial concerns with one another. According to our research, **less than half** of the couples we surveyed had detailed discussions about important money topics, such as their:

- Spending habits (**35%**)
- Wealth goals (**37%**)
- Broader financial picture (**38%**)

Also, not everyone saw eye-to-eye on one of the most critical financial moments in their life – their retirement. This was even notable for couples in their sixties:

- More than **one-third** were not on the same page regarding their retirement dreams.
- **11%** had not given the topic any attention at all.

While these numbers might seem small, misalignment on retirement goals can easily derail a relationship at this later stage of life.

Avoiding money conversations can also create stress and may lead to a more pervasive lack of transparency. Couples who don't talk miss out on enriching their connection through developing shared goals, agreeing on spending habits, and exploring ideas to help achieve financial security together. The good news: the people we studied in committed relationships did recognize the upside to making financial planning a collaborative process:

- Overall, **38%** of those in a relationship wished they talked more about their finances.
- Younger couples appreciated the need even more, as **more than half** of the respondents under fifty wanted these conversations to play a larger role in their relationships.



“ I suggest that my married clients or partners sit down together and write out their goals – short, intermediate, and long. Start with paying off high-interest debt and building cash reserves. Then focus on retirement and other 'essential' goals. Lastly, focus on intermediate and more discretionary goals, like travel budgets and wealth-building. Once this is written down with an action plan, it's then just a matter of sticking to the math! You tend to be calmer, happier, and have a better sense of accomplishment by giving yourself minor wins and checking off the boxes as you go. ”

## ISABEL BARROW

PLANNER  
EDELMAN FINANCIAL ENGINES

---

# KEEPING SECRETS ABOUT MONEY CAN LEAD TO FINANCIAL INFIDELITY

When one partner hides information about their spending habits, the amount of debt they have, or other financial behaviors, this can quickly lead to feelings of betrayal in the relationship. A lack of trust and a sense of financial infidelity can erode the foundation and make it more difficult for couples to work together to achieve their broader goals.

According to our findings:

- **43%** admitted that their partner didn't know everything about their spending.
- Younger couples were even less transparent, as **54%** in their thirties and **56%** in their forties reported not being fully upfront with their partner.
- The data showed that more women (**48%**) than men (**38%**) chose not to reveal everything about their purchases.

Uncertainty in the markets, as well as heightened anxiety over personal finances, also contributes to this issue.

- More than one quarter (**27%**) said inflation was making them less likely to share their spending habits with their partners.

A well-rounded financial advisor often wears many different hats when working with clients. One of those is serving as an impartial party to facilitate conversations, minimize emotions, and keep the clients focused on their shared financial goals.



“I always suggest coming up with solutions that fits you best as a couple. In my household, we figured out that separating our finances into ‘His, Hers, and Ours’ buckets works the best. This allows us to make independent decisions when it comes to minor financial matters without feeling like we need permission from the other. Meanwhile, we’re able to work together on major financial decisions like buying a car, a house, retirement savings, kids’ college, and building our emergency savings as a couple. We also committed to having transparency into credit card debt and any other expenses we may incur independently.”

## ROSE NIANG

PLANNER  
EDELMAN FINANCIAL ENGINES

---

# ADDRESSING PROBLEMS AROUND MONEY HELPS BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

Financial tension affects couples across all ages and wealth brackets:

- Almost half (**46%**) of all respondents said they fought about finances and money with their partner.
- About **one-in-five** said that unhealthy money issues were a threat to their relationship.

While it's unlikely for couples to avoid all financial arguments, addressing money issues at the right time and in a proactive manner can help them reach consensus in a productive way. According to the data:

- **83%** of couples confirmed that talking about their finances can resolve disagreements.
- More than **one-third** agreed it helps them a lot.
- Those who discussed finances in detail were twice as likely to say their relationship had never been stronger (**42%**) compared to those who only discussed them in passing (**21%**).



“ Making significant financial decisions when emotions are running high is like going grocery shopping when you're hungry. It's probably best to let emotions calm down before diving into those financial decisions, just like you should satisfy your appetite before you head to the market. Eventually, at some point, those financial decisions and discussions do need to occur. By finding the right time and forum to have them, you and your partner improve the chances of building a stronger, healthier relationship. ”

## BRIAN LESLIE

PLANNER  
EDELMAN FINANCIAL ENGINES

---

## KEY INSIGHTS

With the economy creating extra challenges, it's important to understand how financial matters can impact marriages and other long-term relationships. While conversations about money can be emotionally charged and difficult to bring to the table, the potential for problems down the road is even greater if chronic disagreements are left unaddressed today.

Open and honest discourse, as part of a broader approach to financial planning, is a way for couples to better understand each other's perspectives, make informed decisions, and avoid unnecessary friction. The guidance and support of an objective financial planner can increase a couple's chances for success, as they look to build trust, resilience, and a path to achieving their long-term goals.

---

# LEARN MORE OR CONNECT WITH A PLANNER

As one of the nation's leading independent financial planning and investment advisory firms, the mission of Edelman Financial Engines (EFE) is to help more people move their financial lives forward.

For over 25 years, EFE has been providing objective financial advice to individuals at home and through the workplace, always acting as a fiduciary in the best interests of clients. EFE was founded on the belief that all investors deserve access to personal, comprehensive financial planning and investment advice.

Our unique approach to serving clients combines advanced investment methodology and proprietary technology with the attention of a dedicated personal financial planner. With this powerful fusion of high-tech and high touch, we're able to deliver the personal planning support and financial confidence that everyone deserves.

**VISIT:** [www.planefe.com](http://www.planefe.com)

**CALL:** (833) PLAN-EFE



© 2023 Edelman Financial Engines, LLC. Edelman Financial Engines® is a registered trademark of Edelman Financial Engines, LLC. All advisory services provided by Financial Engines Advisors L.L.C., a federally registered investment advisor. Results are not guaranteed. See [EdelmanFinancialEngines.com/patent-information](http://EdelmanFinancialEngines.com/patent-information) for patent information. AM2731357