

“Our worst fights are always about money.”

In my practice I have found that conflict about money is a major issue for many couples. In fact, most of us have some pretty strong feelings about money. Feelings we are often reluctant to explore or share with our partner. Unfortunately it is this reluctance that causes couples to come and see me only when they are so mad at each other they can't seem to get past the anger.

The first step to resolving your conflict is to recognize that your emotions come from how you think about money. Thinking that developed from experiences like; how your parents handled money (spenders, hoarders)...how you handled your money before you met. It also revolves around what money symbolizes to you. It can represent power, happiness, security, self-esteem freedom and control, just to name a few.

A major principle I apply to resolving conflicts, including those about money, is to make it a win-win situation. If you find yourselves frequently fighting over things like the budget, or the lack of one, you will need to discuss what each of you want and need. Share your innermost feelings and reveal what money means to you. Sometimes it takes a disagreement to bring the real issues to the surface. For example, your fights may in fact be about a power struggle in your relationship.

Another step is to think about and “brainstorm” as many solutions as you can to satisfy your individual wants and set goals together; short term, mid term and long term. Determine what is most important and decide what you would give up if necessary. Once you have chosen the best solutions that satisfy you both, make it happen.

Agreeing on a budget, and deciding where, how and when the money will be spent, is one solution. Each of you having some money of your own to do with as you wish, could be another part of the solution. Even deciding who will be responsible for keeping and monitoring the budget

could be an important issue. It may not be easy, and it takes some time, but it is well worth the effort if you both feel satisfied.

However, no matter how hard you try, no matter how much you care, there will be times when you simply have to agree to disagree. Accept that you are both entitled to your own points of view. You may both feel that your position is justified.

If you start to experience resentment, and you are not able to resolve a conflict to your satisfaction, you may want to consider help from an outside source. Accept that sometimes love is not enough. Sometimes you may need an objective person who can help you determine your difficulty in solving the problem.

Seek out a person you both trust and are comfortable with, is trained in conflict resolution, and one who will remain neutral.