

Money Matters are a Family Affair

Just Ask a Recent Divorcée

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A recent study performed by UBS¹ revealed that 56 percent of married women leave household investment decisions to their husbands. A surprising 61 percent of younger or “millennial” wives admit to the same.

Why is it, in an era when education and equality for women are front and center, did UBS find so many women willing to relinquish household financial responsibilities?

A survey performed by Fidelity Investments² showed that although 92 percent of women expressed a desire to know more about the household finances, when it came to actually discussing them, only 47 percent said they would consider reaching out to a professional advisor. Fidelity also found that although 60 percent of women *worry* about not having enough money in retirement, 32 percent felt uncomfortable discussing money and 16 percent felt that the topic was just plain “taboo.” Compare that to the 77 percent that said they felt comfortable talking about medical issues with their doctor. Are finances too personal a topic to discuss?

While it may be uncomfortable to talk about money for many women, it is simply imperative that they do so.

Fifty percent of all marriages in the United States will end in divorce. The divorce rate among couples over 50 has doubled in the past 30 years³. Even in healthy marriages, on average, the woman is expected to live five years longer than their male counterpart does⁴. In fact, the median age of a widow in this country is *only 59*⁵.

As a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst®, I have seen my share of an imbalance of financial “power” among couples. Often times it is the woman who feels blindsided by her lack of knowledge of the family’s true financial condition. This lack of knowledge leads to a lack of trust during divorce. And where there is no trust, there is suspicion that marital money has somehow “disappeared.” *If you didn’t know what was there during the marriage, how could you safely say that nothing has disappeared as the marriage has unraveled?* Unfortunately, this is where litigators and forensic accountants log their



hours — spending time searching for “lost” funds amidst an emotional battle, money that otherwise would remain with the family and contribute to the support of the divorced parents and their children.

What this tells us as a society is that now more than ever it is important for women — and men — to get over the stigma that finances are *too personal* to discuss. In the UBS study, nearly 100 percent of the women surveyed after a death or divorce regretted their lack of involvement and would encourage others to take a more active role in their family finances.

Take the lessons from other women who have been through divorce, listen to their concerns and advice, and learn to empower yourself. Don’t merely hope for the best or leave finances up to chance. Be an active participant in your household finances and take control of your future.

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¹<https://money.cnn.com/2018/05/29/pf/women-finances-husbands-ubs-report>

²https://www.fidelity.com/bin-public/060_www_fidelity_com/documents/women-fit-money-study.pdf

³Susan L. Brown and I-Fen Lin, The Gray Divorce Revolution: Rising Divorce Among Middle-Aged and Older Adults, 1990-2010, The Journals of Gerontology: Series B, Volume 67, Issue 6, November 2012

⁴U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, 2016

⁵2009 U.S. Census Bureau, Number, Timing and Duration of Marriages and Divorce: 2009

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-are-women-so-afraid-t_b_7126686

https://www.fidelity.com/bin-public/060_www_fidelity_com/documents/women-fit-money-study.pdf

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Donna combines experience as an investment advisor and wealth manager, a proven approach to long-term financial planning and the unique skills of a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst® to help her clients understand and address the financial issues associated with divorce and obtain a fair and equitable divorce settlement.

Donna’s background includes seven years in Chicago as a derivatives broker. She joined HBKS® Wealth Advisors in 2015.

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