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MONEY & INVESTING

If fiscal prudence be the food of love, play on jeannetteSHOWALTER, CFA ishowaltercfa@yahoo.com



There's a special Valentine's Day treat for readers this year: An interview on relationships and money with April Masini, advice columnist from www.AskApril.com and author of "Think and Date Like a Man." She is also an entertainment industry executive who has negotiated financing for television and feature film productions including "Baywatch," "Miss Universe" and "Blue Crush" in Hawaii.

JS: It seems many of my readers have love relationship issues that are entwined with money. I often write to not worry the 2 percent out/ under performance in portfolio return but do worry whether you will get a divorce costing you 50 percent of all assets.

AM: You're exactly right. Relationships do have a price tag on them yet, often, it's invisible. Close your eyes. Think about all the money spent on dating — grooming, clothing, car maintenance, flowers, restaurants, gym memberships... See where I'm going? That expense is many multiples if you persist in dating the wrong people. But, now, ooa open your eyes to the financial implications of marrying the wrong person as

you might as well hand ya over your wallet — and half your house and half your car, and half your assets.

JS: What are the current statistics on divorce?

AM: According to a study by the University of St. Augustine, 40 percent to 50 percent of all first marriages end in divorce and a whopping 60 percent of all second marriages end in divorce. And because nearly 75 percent of divorces are initiated by women, men should read this very carefully. You don't have to be an accountant or a math wizard to know that divorce will make you poorer. Think your type is all about tall dark and handsome? Or long legs, full lips and good breasts? Consider adding to that dating profile: fiscally conservative, having no debt, gainfully employed, good with money and certainly not a spendthrift.

JS: So what are the primary reasons for divorce? Does infidelity trump money issues?

AM: The primary reason first marriages ending is



April Masini

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unresolved money issues. The primary reason in second marriages is complicated relationships involving step-kids, half-siblings and ex-spouses... manifested in the financial strain of child support and alimony payments... often on both sides of the marriage, all applying constant pressure on the couple. Sexual infidelity, though destructive, is frequently forgiven if it's a one-time indiscretion. Actually, I have known cases where a couple does overcome infidelity and it brought them closer than before. Not so with financial infidelity.

JS: So why can't couples just forgive monetary indiscretions?

AM: Because the injured party is often emotionally devastated by the financial deception as it destroys trust and it might well be that goals of financial security or retirement, for which they have tirelessly worked, are now dashed. It's a one-two punch. The injured party feels she cannot trust her partner with basic needs of security and well-being.

JS: How can couples best navigate these problems?

AM: The best thing is to avoid these money problems and undertake "dating due diligence." It sounds very unromantic but getting to know each other fiscally is very much part of the reality of a long term healthy relationship. My formula for a successful marriage is, firstly, compatibility and, then, of equal importance, shared goals and values. Being motivated in the same direction is key. If you can't talk about money before marriage, what makes you think you can talk about it after marriage?

JS: So what is the solution? It sounds rather bleak.

AM: A pre-nuptial agreement is one of the better solutions. It allows couples to articulate their current financial situation, discuss financial expectations and reach agreements that are put in writing, raising issues that could later be deal breakers. If you can't agree on its terms and don't have the maturity to deal with the issues, you shouldn't get married. Where there are children, it is very important that financial obligations and expectations related to them be defined and agreed prior to marriage.

JS: Doesn't sound too romantic or sexy!

AM: Wrong. Having financial security gives you the freedom to be romantic and sexy!

JS: Any advice for those who are dating?

AM: If you are dating with the intention of building a permanent relationship, especially one leading to marriage, then you had better pick a person with shared values, high character and moral fiber or you will ultimately be tied to a very large liability and you will pay the price, in dollars and burdensome debt, for your bad choices.

JS: So when do seriously minded couples start talking about money?

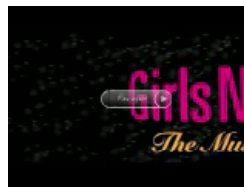
AM: Silent communication begins with initial dates... generosity, style of spending, mutuality in giving to each other, wisdom in purchases, planned versus whimsical spending. You can tell a lot about a person's financial character by his ambition and career path, his purchases and if he spends more than he earns. If a guy insists on splitting the check as a matter of course, in spite of being in a two-year relationship, expect more of the same. He's never going to be generous. Likewise, if a woman is always expecting more without contributing, you should look up the definition of golddigger — you'll probably see her photo there.

Now, some practical advice to my readers: Do not discuss money matters with your loved ones on Valentine's Day. ;

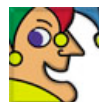
— Jeannette Showalter, CFA is a commodities broker with Worldwide Futures Systems. Contact her at 571- 8896 or showalter@wffsystems.com.

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