

Don't fear money talk; not talking about it is worse

I'm newly married, and I find myself hiding small expenditures from my husband. I don't think he'd have a problem with them, but for some reason I just don't feel like bringing them up. Is this a red flag I should do something about, or is this common for new couples?

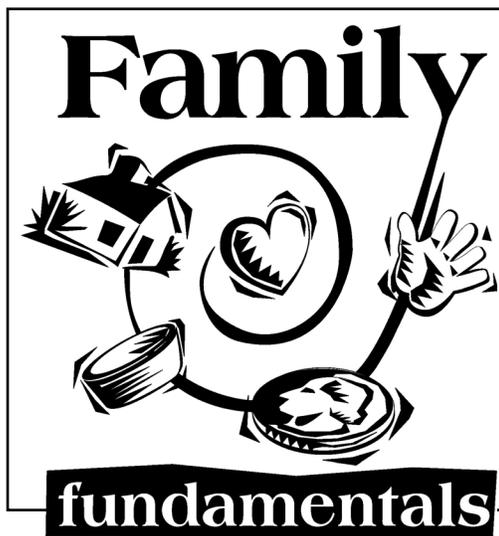
When it comes to how couples (or even individuals) handle financial matters, there's no single answer as to what's best. But it's never a good idea to bury your head in the sand about potential problems that could ambush you in the future. Obviously, you're bothered by your own behavior; you might as well get it out in the open now, in a constructive manner, before the issue turns south.

You're certainly not alone. A recent Harris Interactive online poll (not a scientific study, but interesting nonetheless) found that 31 percent of people who combine finances with their significant other have been deceptive about money matters. Of them:

- 58 percent said they hid cash.
- 54 percent hid a minor purchase.
- 30 percent hid a statement or bill.
- 34 percent lied about finances, debt or money earned.

The same poll revealed that 16 percent of respondents said a previous deception about finances ultimately led to a breakup.

In your case, it sounds like you may have decided that you want complete control over at least some of the household funds. That's



a perfectly legitimate attitude, but since you haven't talked with your husband about it, you feel like you have to hide it from him. That's not so good.

The problem is, many couples find it difficult to talk about money -- especially if you're not used to doing so. But it doesn't have to be a source of anxiety.

There are all sorts of resources available to help you and your husband to figure out how to handle money. One comprehensive guide, "Manage Your Money," is offered by Ohio State University Extension. It's a free online self-study course that takes you step-by-step through financial decision-making, including determining what you want to do with your money, figuring out where your money goes currently, how to save for future goals, how to plan your spending, knowing your credit limits and keeping credit under control, and organizing your financial records.

The course, available online at <http://ohioline.osu.edu/mym/>, starts with some great guidance on getting the conversation started. It includes communication tips to help prevent derailing the conversation before it gets started. You and your husband may not always agree about money, but what matters is establishing open lines of communication about it and finding ways to compromise when you disagree.

Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues. It is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Family Fundamentals, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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Dear Subscriber: This column was reviewed by Nancy Hudson, educator and county director with Ohio State University Extension, Family and Consumer Sciences.

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