



HEALTH

Financial Infidelity: The little green lies we tell

Do you keep money secrets from your partner? Do you spend money without your partner's knowledge? Do you hide your

told their partner that they paid less for a purchase than they actually did. Sixteen percent confessed to buying something that they did not want their spouse to know about.

While both men and woman admitted to financial dishonesty, women were more likely to tell their husbands that they paid less than they actually did for clothing and gifts, while men minimized their spending on cars, entertainment, and sporting events. Almost twice as many men admitted that they had spent over \$1,000 without their wife's knowledge, while women were more likely to say that the most they had spent without telling their husbands was \$100.

Forty-five percent of those who admitted being deceitful around spending stated that they were not honest about their spending in order to avoid their partner's anger, disapproval or lecturing. In the same survey, 44 percent reported that they believe it is okay to keep financial secrets from their spouses.

It is not surprising that people keep secrets about money. Many couples

avoid talking about money because it is such an emotionally loaded issue. If and when financial infidelity is discovered by one of the partners, it rocks the very foundation of their relationship. "If he/she is being deceitful about this, what else are they lying to me about?"

Financial infidelity is such a common issue in our work with couples that my father and business partner, Ted Klontz, Ph.D., and I developed a four step process for addressing financial infidelity in relationships, which uses the acronym SAFE:

S: Speak Your Truth. Talking about money and our financial behaviors is a taboo topic in our culture. We find that people are often more willing to talk about their sex lives than their financial lives. Many of us carry significant shame around money, often because we think we have too much or too little. The first step to establishing financial safety in your relationship is to sit down with your partner and talk about money; what it means, your early money experiences, your preferred spending/saving style, and your financial goals.

A: Agree to a Plan. Many acts

of financial infidelity occur with couples who lack explicit agreed-upon strategies of spending and saving. A comprehensive spending plan is an essential component of a healthy financial relationship. It is helpful for couples to agree on the amount of money that each can spend without needing to consult with their partner. When a potential purchase goes above the agreed upon amount, the couple agrees to consult with each other prior to making the purchase.

F: Follow the Agreement. It sounds simple, but this is the hard part. An agreement is only as good as a couple's commitment to honoring it. It is helpful in the beginning to set up the agreement to be valid for the next 30-60 days. After the agreed upon period of time, the couple meets and answers these three questions: Is the plan working for me? Is it working for you? Is it working for our relationship? If either person in the couple answers "no" to any of these questions, the couple should renegotiate their plan.

E: Establish an Emergency Response Plan. If couples find that they can't talk about money without fighting, can't come to an agreement, or can't

keep their agreements about money, they may be in trouble. As such, it is important to have an Emergency Response Plan, which goes into effect when these types of difficulties arise. This plan identifies, ahead of time, what the couple will do when they arrive at an impasse. For example, when a couple cannot arrive at or adhere to a plan, the Emergency Response Plan might include an agreement to seek help from a psychologist, pastor, social worker, or marriage and family therapist.

With money being the number one cause of marital conflict and the number one cause of divorce in the early years of marriage, couples cannot afford to be financially unfaithful. Use the SAFE process to establish an agreement around money with your partner to maintain financial fidelity in your relationship.

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YOU'RE NOT ALONE



DR. BRAD KLONTZ

Clinical psychologist

purchases from your partner? Do you tell your partner you spent less on something than you actually did? Do you have secret stashes of money that your partner knows nothing about? Have you made investment decisions behind your partner's back? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may be putting your relationship at risk by committing acts of financial infidelity.

In a survey of 1,001 people commissioned by Money Magazine, 40 percent of the respondents admitted that they have

Over-scheduling: an American epidemic

ARACONTENT

Overscheduling is a nationwide epidemic. From preschoolers to CEOs, we are constantly running from one activity to the next. This busy and sometimes frantic lifestyle affects all aspects of life and many people feel the strain caused by overloaded to-do lists.

According to the authors of "Yes, You Can ... Find More Meaning in Your Life," Jack Jonathan and Sheelagh Manheim, Ph.D., overscheduling can create a narrow focus that prevents you from experiencing meaning in your life. These two regular contributors to www.YesYouCanOnline.info offer ways to step off the treadmill of busyness and reaffirm what is good in your life.

Jonathan and Manheim suggest finding a balance in five fundamental areas of life: positive attitude, good physical health, personal relationships, financial well-being and a passion for knowledge.

"Anyone looking to streamline their schedule can use these essentials as guidelines to help balance the way they spend their time," said Jonathan. "Paying attention to each basic area of life may help a person to feel more at peace."

Jonathan and Manheim offer the following six ideas to help bring a feeling of meaning into a busy life.

- Foster a Positive Attitude. Begin your day with a sense of wonder. Ask yourself, "What is in store for me today?" Then set achievable goals for the day. Remain open to other possibilities so challenges that come up will not feel overwhelming. Do at least one thing each day that creates in you a sense of happiness, delight, accomplishment or wonder.
- Nurture Your Body. Sometimes basic physical needs are set aside because of busy schedules. It is ideal to schedule time for exercise and recreation. "But, you can also nurture your body by simply paying attention," Jonathan advises. "Why not pause a minute between activities, look out of the window, take a deep

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