How to Talk to Your Spouse When You're Careful with Money and He's a Spender

The 6 things everyone should know to communicate fabulously with your spouse about money

A few months ago, I did a show where we spoke about the financial issues related to divorce. That episode got a lot of feedback from people who had real fears and stories to share. One letter showed just how frustrated a woman was with how her husband handled daily financial affairs, and that led to this list:

1. Advisors often suggest "money dates," but if that's not for you, just find a comfortable time to chat when things aren't stressful. Don't dig in when he comes home from a bad day or right after he shows you a new purchase that he really likes.
2. Keep an ongoing "question list" or "topic list" that you share with your spouse that says things like, "Review daily spending," "Compare monthly inflow to outflow," "Review investment decisions," and other open-ended ideas. This is better than, "Why did you by ballgame tickets for $300!?!?!?"
3. Don't lecture. Listen to your spouse and don't dismiss his feelings. Ask questions.
4. Try and talk about money issues at least once a month, so it becomes routine. This doesn't have to be a complaint session, but rather could vary between reviewing the monthly budget, talking about long-term goals, making some specific decision like about making a big purchase, deciding between buying lunch and brown-bagging, etc.
5. Examine mistakes that you... as a couple... have made.
6. Meet with your financial planner for a review and let him know that you and your spouse don't always see eye-to-eye. That will help the planner run the meeting with the goal of improving communication.

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Date of show: 06/28/2018