THE SMALL BOOK FOR

FAMILY FINANCES

Make friends with each other – and with your money!

Catholic Charities
of the Diocese of Green Bay

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PLEASE NOTE
The content of this book is not intended to provide any form of legal advice. All financial advice is for a general audience and may not fit your situation. Please seek professional assistance for specific advice for your circumstances.

Introduction

This small book on family finances has a unique purpose: to show you a path your family can take to improve your finances through four essential components.

01 | **COMMITMENT TO BEING "ALL IN"**
No-backup-plan level of commitment

02 | **ALIGNMENT**
Being in agreement

03 | **MONEY MANAGEMENT FUNDAMENTALS**
Emergency savings, living below your means, and avoiding interest and fees

04 | **COMBINE AND TRUST**
Mutually sharing all money and being trustworthy

This book does not promise that any of these components are easy, but rather that the effort is worthwhile. Trust and read on!

PRAYER BEFORE DISCUSSING FINANCES

Good and gracious God, help us pray together often. Help us always see Your reflection in each other. Help us not live separate lives, but share our lives. Help us make plans with true wisdom and to see money as nothing more than a resource. Give us whatever we lack to become holy, so we can see our lives the way You see them. Please guide us every day and give us the strength to follow Your will. Amen.

Commitment to Being All In

I am not a marriage counselor, but I was trained in sales, so I would like to sell you on the concept of being "all in." Marriage is designed to be an "until death do us part" all-in relationship. This takes an immense amount of trust.

Let's look at it from this perspective: If you and your spouse both commit to being all in and the marriage does not end in divorce, then it will have been (by all accounts) a good marriage. If, however, you and your spouse both commit to being all in, and for some reason the marriage ends in divorce, you would know with absolute certainty that you each gave it your best shot. And because of that — the all-in commitment — it's highly improbable that the marriage would end in divorce.

Imagine needing to jump over a gorge: If you don't give it your best jump, you are more likely to fall in the gorge than if you gave your best possible jump. Though you may still fall in the gorge giving your best jump, your chances of getting across are far better.

You have two choices: Trust or not trust. It is my firm belief that you should lean into trust. This book will explore the concept of "all in" when it comes to finances. We will discuss aligning values, budgeting, spending habits, combining bank accounts, and other related topics.

For the concepts proposed in this book to be successful, trust is crucial. If you are feeling a little on edge (perhaps trust has not been earned in your marriage), then there may be more work to do alongside this approach to finances.

What if your spouse is financially illiterate? Do not think that is an insult, but rather a result of poor financial education. If your spouse is financially incompetent, then you would have valid reasons not to trust your spouse with money. If so, your journey with this book will also involve helping your spouse navigate the basics of financial fundamentals.

If you are all in, then you have plenty of time for that journey to unfold. Nothing has to be resolved on day one. It may take a long time (even years) to reach the ideals suggested here, and that is okay. If you are married, then you are already committed. You made a vow — a promise — so you might as well go all in.

Alignment

Human relationships can be messy, and marriage is no exception. The daily proximity of married couples increases the opportunity for conflict. While there are many examples of bad relationships, those do not have to be the norm. This conversation on alignment is meant to chart a course for your family (specifically with finances, though it applies elsewhere) that would improve both the marriage and the finances. Alignment is simply about **agreeing on priorities** when it comes to money. Priorities, goals, methods — everything. Your agreements regarding finances do not need to be written down but can be formed from intentional conversations over time.

FINANCIAL ILLITERACY

Parents have not passed on financial education to their children. People look to schools to fill this gap, and I hope they are successful, but until then, we should not be surprised that most people are financially incompetent.

Instead, financial behaviors are taught by marketers, which is the last teacher you would want for money management skills. Financial advice today often resembles "buy now, pay later" and is presented in a positive light, but that advice can be a money death trap.

Examples of financial alignment of priorities

- We agree to save $250 per month in long-term savings.
- We always pay bills on time.
- We pay our credit cards off in full every month.
- We pay the minimum on our student loans (since it is the lowest interest rate of our debts).
- We only eat out as a family.
- We do not commit to ongoing expenses (subscriptions) without discussing.
- We always discuss large purchases ahead of time.

Examples of financial alignment on goals

- We want to buy a home.
- We want to eliminate the car loan as quickly as possible.
- We want to have enough money saved to cover future car repairs and surprises.

Examples of financial alignment on methods

- My husband puts $125 per paycheck into our savings account.
- We pay all bills online except for the car payment (paid in person).
- On days we get paid, I pay all of the online bills, and I write out the check for my husband to make the car payment, since the bank is near his work.
- We have a monthly "coffee date" to review our finances.

Being aligned often means dealing with conflict upfront. To get aligned, the first step is to determine how far you are from being aligned. So, a couple must start by discussing an issue. Once a husband and wife have identified their stance on any financial matter, they can now engage in a fight. I mean that in jest; however, that is effectively what happens. And the disagreement does not need to become a fight, but rather a chance to sort out feelings, ideas, biases, and unspoken hopes. All of these things can come to the forefront, be questioned, debated, and thought about by each party long after, which leads to both parties coming closer together. It's critical to remember that how you say something is as important as what you say. Using non-accusatory language limits the power of emotion, which will otherwise turn a discussion into an argument.

Example: Accusatory vs. non-accusatory language

Accusatory: Why do **you** always spend so much money shopping?
Non-accusatory: To save more, how could **we** decrease how much we spend shopping?

Example: The new car dilemma

Emma and Tristan had two reliable vehicles until Tristan's car was totaled in a rare moose collision incident. That evening, Tristan told Emma of some new cars for sale he found online. Emma grew up in a family that always purchased used cars and maintained them until they were no longer fixable. Tristan's family, on the other hand, always purchased new cars, paid professionals for all maintenance, and purchased newer vehicles every few years. Tristan knew Emma would experience "sticker shock" at the high price of new vehicles, so he considered just buying it without discussing it first. He would then say to Emma, "Sorry, it's too late, I already bought it."

But Tristan knew that would not be fair and would be avoiding conflict and discussion. So, he made his case to Emma for why he "needed" an all-new vehicle. After much difficult discussion, the truth came out — what he needed wasn't a "new" vehicle, but rather a "reliable" vehicle. The fear of a breakdown on his commute, which would inconvenience his employer, was his biggest fear. In the end, they agreed to buy a newer used vehicle for far less than the all-new vehicles, and Emma's dad would help them find a reliable car. They got "aligned" on their priorities — vehicle reliability and price.

It is not essential to have alignment on any specific topic in the first conversation. There will be some topics that may take a long time to resolve, but these topics should be discussed without the pressure of a time constraint to make a decision.

Example: Poor timing

Jenny and Robert (and their three adorable children) took a family vacation to Florida. Once arrived, Jenny announced that she hoped to take everyone on an excursion to swim with dolphins for $250. Robert, distraught, began to argue with Jenny about how much they had already spent on the trip: cost of travel, food, and beach towels they had forgotten to pack, among other expenses. He then tried to emphasize their aligned goal of saving for the down payment on a house. This is a poorly timed attempt to keep aligned, because the family is already on vacation and doesn't know how much money they want to spend. The conversation about how much to spend on the trip should have occurred before the trip, which would have kept everyone happier with expectations still met.

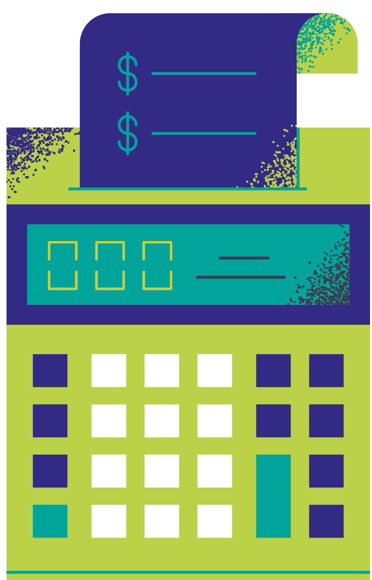
There are broader topics that should be discussed, such as family, financial goals, dreams, and the like. These sorts of things will shift over time as priorities change for the entire family. This means that alignment is not a "one and done" activity. It is a constant process, but one that gets easier with time.

If you are not yet married, then pursuing alignment with your future spouse now will make this process easier. Regardless of when you start pursuing alignment, good communication on all matters (including finances) must be ongoing as circumstances and priorities change.

The most fundamental element of alignment is respect for your spouse. No matter what has happened in the past — no matter how your spouse feels about money or how much you disagree with his or her financial decisions — it is most productive to give your spouse the benefit of the doubt and to understand his or her perspective. This will move you closer to alignment.

If you prioritize respect for your spouse, the process of finding alignment will be substantially easier and more meaningful. It will also help you control your emotions in the process. Alignment does not resemble coercion, bullying, or degradation. It is not a win for one spouse to outshout the other into submission. That is not alignment. The underlying financial issues cannot be resolved by adding new issues, like disrespect. To truly "win" means that you do not care if your position is the one that wins, but that you and your spouse are both at peace with the plan. Is the agreed-upon plan better than yours? Maybe not in your mind. But does it still work? If the answer is yes, then move on and remain open to revisiting it later to work toward an even better plan.

Another perk of having alignment is that day-to-day financial decision-making is faster. Aside from reduced stress, each spouse can make unilateral decisions that the other spouse would likely agree with. It might seem counterintuitive, but there is an incredible freedom in knowing healthy boundaries, including financial boundaries. Neither spouse needs to discuss every single purchase before it occurs.



Example: Cases of quick decisions

Case 1: Miranda and Jeffrey are aligned on not wasting money by paying too high a price for the things they need. However, they are also aligned on time management, because they have a busy family life. While at the grocery store, Miranda remembers that two light bulbs are burned out at home. Knowing it will be a while before she can get to a hardware store where the price will be slightly less, she buys the bulbs now to save time.

Case 2: Andrea and Phil have been stressed since Phil lost his job unexpectedly. At this point, every penny counts. They are aligned in keeping their spending in check until their income increases. Andrea pays all of the mandatory bills (needs) without checking with Phil first. They have already separated needs from wants, so there is no need to discuss it again before paying for needs.

Some couples have only one person interested in managing financial matters, and that is okay. However, there is a significant risk in having only one spouse aware of the financial situation.

Suppose the spouse who manages finances has a significant accident or dies. In that case, the other spouse (who took no part in financial matters, such as paying bills, debts, managing assets, credit, etc.) will be completely unprepared to handle finances in the other spouse's stead. This is a widespread problem with disastrous results, but it is the easiest disaster to avoid. Both spouses should understand the overall financial situation, be able to easily locate contact information for creditors, identify assets, have access to necessary login information, and be able to access any other information that may be useful.

A "non-numbers" discussion that sets the tone for how money is to happen in the household makes "numbers" decisions easier. Since the broad-scale parameters have been discussed and decided upon, each spouse can operate independently within those parameters and purposes.

Example: Non-number alignment

Ella and Brett demonstrate non-number alignment by having mutual goals (which makes "numbers" decisions easier). Both spouses want to buy a home, so they understand that unnecessary spending will delay their goal of homeownership.

They both believe that a certain amount of money constitutes "a lot of money" — in their case — $50. Therefore, neither will buy something over that dollar amount without taking time to discuss it. Why? Big decisions should be made together.

To ensure everything is on track, both spouses should have a clear understanding of the balances in their checking and savings accounts. Your agreed-upon parameters may be incorrect if your bank account balances are decreasing (or you are not on track for your goals). That is a sign to revisit those parameters.

Example: Revisiting parameters

Ella and Brett are surprised to find that their savings balance is stagnant when it should be increasing. They discuss their basic parameters for spending and decide together that they need to cut out all convenience items and dining out.

They realized that when one of them dined out, the cost was $15 (well under $50, which they consider "big"). However, since they each dined out about three times per week, the monthly cost was $360.

So, they have agreed to adjust their parameters by agreeing to eliminate all dining out for now.

What you lose by alignment

Since I have made a case in favor of alignment, in the spirit of providing all options, please also consider the case against it. This is not satire, nor is it meant to be a condemning judgment. Here are the drawbacks to pursuing the alignment suggested: You will lose your ability to prioritize yourself, as you will be prioritizing the entire family unit. Your self-concern will be secondary to the aligned vision you have with your spouse. This means that you may not always be able to do what you want.

Example: Abandoning self-concern for apparent foolishness

Mary and Tom have recovered from the financial struggles they experienced earlier in their marriage. Now, they have alignment on their finances, which sometimes means nothing more than compromise.

It has become important to Mary to purchase nutritional supplements to support her health. Tom is horrified at the price tag of the small bottles of supplements. He does not believe these supplements are accomplishing anything, but his wife is hopeful.

Tom used to spend money on collectible model cars — a hobby shared with a few friends. He no longer buys collectibles often, as the family budget is tight. He has set aside his self-concern, despite being teased by his friends for missing the opportunities to find collectibles like them. He made the choice to be aligned at a real cost to himself, because his care for his wife (alignment) was more important.

This was especially hard because the purchase of health supplements does not make sense to him.

This means that you may spend money on something you think is foolish. This means that you may check with your spouse before purchasing something that wasn't previously discussed. This means that you will have friends, family, and coworkers who do not understand your choices and who spend freely. By choosing alignment, you will be living a different life from theirs. To stay aligned, you need to choose to be okay with it, even when it is not easy. Hopefully, it is now obvious why we discussed being all in at the beginning of this book.

Money Management Fundamentals

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

1 EMERGENCY SAVINGS

Of all fundamental financial principles, the most effective is simply to have emergency savings — a safety net to protect against surprises. In life, things go wrong, but savings can protect you. Creating emergency savings is a fundamental commitment to make, and it typically requires minimal effort to achieve.

Biblical support for emergency savings

Joseph of the Old Testament helped the Pharaoh prepare for famine by storing grain and other resources for the impending famine (Gn 41:1-36). Joseph had a prophetic vision that foretold the coming famine. We don't know what's coming, but that doesn't mean we should be completely unprepared. Similarly, in the New Testament, Jesus gives the parable of the virgins going to the wedding feast (Mt 25:1-13). The wise virgins packed enough oil, and the foolish virgins did not. What I love about this parable is the simplicity. Would it have been that much extra work to carry a little extra oil? Just a little bit of extra preparation would have saved them all the trouble.

Example: Emergency services

Sharon and William have accumulated $36,000 in savings. This money is always set aside in case of an extreme emergency. Disasters seem to have the worst timing: Sharon was on the second day of her 12-week medical leave when William's job was terminated with no warning. These events are already quite overwhelming, but they know one thing that can give them some peace of mind: Savings will get them through financially. They spend about $6,000 per month, so even if they do not scale back their spending, they can easily handle the next three months before Sharon goes back to work (even if William does not find a new job right away). Because of this, William can be picky about his next job, securing one with the same or better pay and a work-life balance that matches what he is accustomed to.

One thing is certain about finances: You are more likely to end up with an unexpected expense than an unexpected income. It's like throwing a dice and the number "one" meaning you get more money and numbers "two through six" meaning you lose money. It doesn't matter how many times you roll the dice: you are likely to experience unexpected losses in life. If you are a single person, in the end, the decision not to have savings hurts only you. If you are a parent or spouse, your entire family will suffer from the lack of savings that you did not prioritize. To have emergency savings, you must make it a priority to consistently save money for that purpose.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

2 LIVING BELOW YOUR MEANS

The second basic principle is closely related: living below your means. To save money for future emergencies, you must spend less than you make to free up the funds for savings. You can build emergency savings by taking on a second job, but it's essential to remember that your family also needs you personally, not just your income (although additional employment remains an option). Living below your means, however, frees up money for savings every single month. There are other benefits too. One obvious benefit is that when things go wrong, your financial commitments are already decreased. This means that you do not need to make cuts when times get hard, because you already made those cuts and are already living below the means that you had prior.

Example: Living below your means

Amanda and Luiz chose to start living below their means several years ago. They bought a cheaper house than they could afford — and likewise, cheaper cars. Due to the cheaper house and cheaper cars, they pay less in insurance. They chose a cheaper phone plan and opted to use only free TV. Because of these decisions, their household spends only $2,800 per month, but earns $4,200 per month. That additional $1,400 per month has built a healthy emergency savings, but some of it will also be used for their annual winter vacations. Suddenly, Amanda's employer reduced her hours by 10 hours per week for the foreseeable future. Since they already live substantially below their means, this change has no impact on their monthly finances. They already set themselves up for success and need not make any changes to their spending. They are still totally fine!

Another significant benefit of living below your means is that you will be less attached to worldly possessions. Honestly, most people (myself included) often spend money on things we don't need. We are too attached to things, including even abstract things like entertainment. After our basic needs are covered, all other expenses should be examined. Ask yourself, do I really want this? Or do I feel compelled to want this? Am I addicted?

WANTS: CAN BE ELIMINATED

- Streaming services
- Fast food, restaurants, coffee shops
- Vacations
- Upgraded technology
- Newer or brand-name clothing
- Upgraded vehicles
- Additional property
- Boats, campers, snowmobiles, ATVs
- Charity donations
- Presents for others
- Buying anything NOT on the needs list

NEEDS: SHOULD NOT BE ELIMINATED

- Sufficient housing and utilities
- Sufficient transportation
- Sufficient food and water
- Sufficient clothing

Spending money on wants is not bad unless that spending exceeds (or even approaches) the level of your income. Another important concept is “not following the crowd.” The world is full of people making bad financial decisions; you should not follow them into their folly. It is a good approach to say to yourself, “There is something new that many people are buying, I should not buy it now.” The price of anything new for sale (especially technologies) drops over time. If you wait for new to become older, you will spend less than your neighbors.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

3 AVOID PAYING INTEREST/FEES

Another principle is not to waste money on interest. Some interest is unavoidable, such as on a mortgage or, occasionally, a car. There are many banks and credit unions that offer loans for purchases that should never be made with a loan. These include vacations, cosmetic home remodeling, Christmas gifts, and other similar expenses. These are illegitimate reasons to take on debt. If you disagree with that, then I recommend you examine your priorities (and your planning ahead). These things are wants and should be paid with money you have saved.

Related to the principle of not paying interest unnecessarily is the avoidance of unnecessary fees. Fees of all kinds should be avoidable: late fees, convenience fees, bank fees, ATM fees, etc. These fees can be easily avoided by planning ahead and living within your means. What is wrong with fees? They are a waste of your money. It's that simple. An unnecessary fee or excessive interest weakens your household's financial position.

How to live below your means and have emergency savings: The budget

We have established the importance of emergency savings and living below your means. An essential tactic to get there is a written budget. The reasons people dislike budgets are largely excuses. A budget does not need to be complicated (see Appendix B).

A written budget is crucial because it outlines the exact plan you will follow, which helps you live below your means. It means occasionally making tough decisions on cutting out wants. This is the hard truth: Removing wants is the primary way to reduce your spending and increase your savings (see Appendix C).

It is easy for spending on wants to get out of control when it is not tracked or focused on. A written budget agreed upon by husband and wife forces a commitment to following the plan.

If you rely upon whims and feelings, you will overspend. A written budget is a contract with yourself and each other to prioritize larger family goals over your own wants.

Lastly, be on the lookout for what is called spending leaks. These are things you spend money on but are not given a second thought (and escape the careful preparation of the budget). One of the biggest spending leaks is the consumption of convenience foods. Gas station food, a quick cup of coffee, vending machines, the last little thing next to the checkout counter, etc. They all add up. These purchases should fall into the very rare "emergency only" category.

When you experience rumblings in your stomach during the middle of your workday, it's essential to ignore those hunger signals and continue with your day (or plan ahead by packing an inexpensive snack). If health issues require you to eat at certain times, packing a snack or emergency kit is the answer.

A little discomfort is okay. Even with the slight discomfort that may come from following the basics of this book, your comfort level will still be far better than that of your parents' generation and certainly their parents' generation. So, stop whining!

Combine and Trust

Combining and trusting means combining all of your money. Many married couples have separate bank accounts without shared access. Then, the married couple divvy up who pays which bills, or they pay half of the bills as if they are roommates. Again, this is not intended to be a condemning judgment, but rather a statement of how aspects could be improved.

Under these circumstances, it occasionally occurs that one spouse has more money than the other and spends it as they wish. The other spouse, who by chance makes less money or has a greater share of the bills to pay, has less discretionary money.

This constant imbalance of financial freedom within the marriage can become frustrating for the spouse with less money. Adding debt problems to this situation exacerbates the issue.

The spouse with more money may say, "I am not giving you any more of my money, because my money is for me to do with what I want."

This means that the family, as a unit, struggles financially because they are not financially aligned. Higher financial priorities, such as housing, debt, and credit scores, are often victims of financial selfishness.

Combining and trusting are the opposite of those things. All the money should go to one checking account where all the bills come out of (and everyone is on board with the spending plan). It takes trust, because your spouse has access to all of the money just as you do.

There may be a time when your spouse should not have access to all the money, and that makes sense under certain circumstances. Those would include mental instability, addiction, likelihood of falling for scams, or serious financial illiteracy. Without those severe issues, the only worry you should have is financial infidelity (intentional and secretive misuse of money). Outside of that, you have nothing to fear.

SEPARATE BANK ACCOUNTS

This can occur in any marriage, but is particularly common in second marriages, due to the previously broken trust. A system like this is both inefficient and a recipe for future problems, financial and non-financial.

By starting with alignment of values and goals, you can now have combined finances and trust each other to do the right thing according to your agreed-upon plan.

If this approach has not been part of your marriage previously, now is the opportunity to build the muscle of trust. Furthermore, if you are prone to making financial mistakes that cause your spouse to lose trust in you, then this is your opportunity to develop the muscle of good financial behaviors. No one should expect perfection, but everyone should strive to do their best.

Benefits of combining and trusting

The benefits of combining and trusting are clear in many ways.

First, in the spirit of alignment, both spouses are fulfilling what they are already aligned on, namely, their dreams and goals. This can be one of many wins that the married couple will experience, helping them work through other problems that life brings.

Second, this system is efficient. All of the money is in one place and can be easily tracked and managed. There are fewer questions and less wasted time determining which bills have been paid and which ones still need to be paid. Errors are caught quickly. There are fewer chances of the account going negative because there is more total money in the account (and it's being watched by two different people).

Third, each party can turn off the part of their brain that is worrying about the max they're supposed to be spending. The single bank account shows what is available (the written budget also helps).

Fourth, the husband and wife will likewise control their spending, knowing that their spending is closely watched and carefully managed. This can help break bad financial habits. However, it may be problematic for one spouse to feel like they are the "parent of their spouse" — constantly pointing out mistakes. That type of dimension in the relationship should be avoided.

Example: A family that does not combine and trust

Jim and Sophia have maintained separate bank accounts for years. Jim pays the house payment, his gas, and his fun money, while Sophia covers the rest of the bills. Over time, Sophia has needed to reduce her work hours and receives only minimal annual raises.

Recently, utility bills have increased due to rate hikes, car insurance is higher because of the addition of vehicles to the policy, and food costs have skyrocketed. Sophia's pay simply cannot cover everything.

However, Jim sees his money as his own and doesn't want to change his personal spending habits. He tells Sophia to seek assistance on her own or negotiate with creditors to obtain lower payments for her bills. Meanwhile, each person is annoyed by the spending choices the other spouse makes, which fuels resentment within their marriage. That resentment is often quiet but resurfaces sharply during tense arguments about money.

After two years of poor payment records with creditors, damaged credit scores, court judgments for outstanding debts, and a wage garnishment, Jim and Sophia agree that some changes are necessary.

Jim gives Sophia an extra $300 per month to use toward the bills she pays and grants her access to view the bank account. Meanwhile, Sophia has been hurt by Jim's past financial decision not to share his income (or "fun money") for the family expenses and now scrutinizes every purchase Jim makes with his debit card. Whenever a financial argument starts, Sophia always repeats, "You had $300 extra per month and you didn't help out. That caused all of our problems. Where did that money go every month? You don't even know because you are bad with money." After years of resentment, it is difficult to change these attitudes. We project our past experiences onto our expectations of the future.

What you lose by combining and trusting

Similar to the downsides of alignment, combining and trusting will require you to voluntarily surrender some or all of your financial freedom. Whatever you spend money on, your spouse is going to know. If you overspend, your spouse will know. If your spouse overspends, you must decide whether or not to address it. Taking the leap of faith to trust your spouse with finances may be terrifying if you have been hurt by this before. Again, similar to the discussion on alignment, by choosing to combine and trust, you are choosing a way of life (financially) that is different from that of other people you know. That is a factor that you must be willing to live with.

Conclusion

As was said in the beginning, none of this is easy, but the effort is worthwhile! We hope this book starts productive conversations about how you spend money as a family (and you now have some helpful ideas, big and small). We wish you and your family well!

APPENDIX A

FINANCIAL ABUSE AND WARNING SIGNS

When discussing marriage and finances, there must also be a conversation about what constitutes financial abuse and the related warning signs.

Examples of marital financial abuse:

- Limiting access to money that the controlled spouse earns
- Using controlled spouse's assets without asking
- Misusing the controlled spouse's accounts or credit
- Ruining controlled spouse's credit
- Failing to pay bills in controlled spouse's name
- Controlling all financial matters (without spouse input)
- Hiding assets from controlled spouse
- Refusing to earn money to pay bills
- Blocking access to accounts and money for controlled spouse

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE BUDGET

Month: April
Paycheck 1: $1,900
Paycheck 2: $1,900
Total Income= $3,800

Put in savings 10%: $380
Rent: $1,300
Car Insurance: $85
Heat + Electric: $180
Water bill: $80
Cell phones: $75
Internet: $60
Car payment: $250
Student loans: $185
Renter's Insurance: $25
Life Insurance 1: $45
Life Insurance 2: $55
Total Important Bills: $2,720

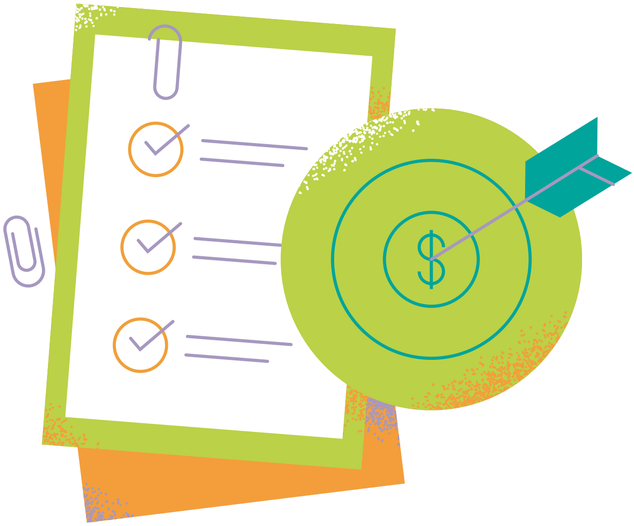
Remaining to spend: $1,080

Groceries/Household: $500
Gas: $200
Eating Out: $100
Donations: $50

Remaining to spend: $230

Save for Christmas: $75
Save for new tires: $50
Subscriptions (wants): $35

Leave for surprises: $70



APPENDIX C

NEEDS VS. WANTS T-CHART ACTIVITY

It’s time to separate your needs from your wants! Don’t worry about numbers for now, but just write down the categories using your bank statements, credit card statements, online order history, etc. As you separate needs and wants, discuss the items together, considering if you spend too much or too little on each category. If you want, you can also tally up the expenses for one month (or two or three) to see where your money is actually going. Once you know where your money is going, it is easier to make decisions for the future!

NEEDS	WANTS

APPENDIX D

CHECK YOUR FINANCIAL HEALTH

Finances can be overwhelming, but recognizing where you stand is the first step toward stability. Use the chart below to see which issues may match your current situation.

SIGNS OF FINANCIAL STRUGGLE

- Constant worry about money
- Spouses with separate bank accounts
- Don't have a budget
- Lack awareness of expenses (amounts, due dates, etc.)
- Family issues with inheritance
- Financially supporting adult children
- Supporting other people with money
- Paying minimum payments on credit cards
- Frequently using "grace period" to pay bills
- Shopping addiction or excessive gift giving

SIGNS OF FINANCIAL DISTRESS

- Getting sued over money
- Account overdrafts/NSF fees
- Phone or internet shut off
- Often late on bill payments
- Money owed to IRS (federal taxes)
- Credit card debt increasing
- Denied loans
- Not making credit card payments
- Job loss
- Living paycheck to paycheck
- Using credit cards for everyday living expenses
- Missing work due to childcare or medical needs
- Losing sleep or cannot stop thinking about money problems

SIGNS OF FINANCIAL CRISIS

- Eviction
- Garnishment
- Foreclosure
- Being any amount behind on house payment or property taxes
- Repossession of car
- Utility shut off
- Having auto-title loans
- Having payday loans
- Money owed to WI DOR (state taxes)
- Seeking unconventional, online paid help
- Cannot afford medication
- Homeless (including couch-surfing, motel, living in vehicle, etc.)
- Frequent gambling

APPENDIX E

TO-DO CHECKLIST AND NOTES SHEET

Our top seven aligned priorities (see page 6 for ideas):

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

Our top three aligned financial goals (see page 6 for ideas):

1
2
3

How often should we discuss finances together?

☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Every 2 weeks
☐ Monthly ☐ Other ______________________

If we do not have at least $2,000 set aside for emergencies, what are the best ways we can save that much money quickly:

1
2
3

Do we have any issues that are a financial struggle, distress, or crisis (see Appendix D)? What should we do about them?

What other financial matters do we need to discuss more?

PLEASE NOTE

If you are currently dealing with serious financial challenges — such as addiction, gambling, foreclosure or eviction risk, payday loans, or overwhelming credit card debt — this book can still offer valuable guidance. However, it is important to prioritize resolving these urgent issues as soon as possible.

For further assistance and education, please contact Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Green Bay at 920-272-8234 or charitiesgb@gbdioc.org. For more information, visit our website at catholiccharitiesgb.org.

ORDERING

To order more copies of "The Small Book for Family Finances" for a group, please call 920-272-8234 or email charitiesgb@gbdioc.org. You can also visit the Catholic Charities website at catholiccharitiesgb.org.

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