

Marriage, Family, and the Impact of Economic Stress

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You may not be in control of your job or the economic downturn, but you and your spouse can always find positive and resourceful ways to handle the impact of economic stress on your marriage and your family. How you handle this stress can actually bring you closer to each other. It does not have to cause distance and continual conflict.

If you are experiencing financial stress due to the downturn in the economy you likely can relate to the following:

Feelings: confusion, fear, panic, guilt, shame, anger

Beliefs: I can't trust anyone, the world is not safe, the end is near
I don't know what to do.

Energy Level : exhausted, feel like you are spinning inside, sense of turmoil. Feeling a need to retreat or withdraw.

If you are not aware or too overwhelmed to deal with what you're going through you may find that you are taking your frustrations, fears, or other emotions out on your partner, your spouse, or the kids.

If any of the above sounds familiar, you need to find ways to feel a sense of peace with yourself, understanding and acceptance between you and your spouse, and understanding for how the stress may be impacting your children.

Below are some helpful guidelines for dealing with financial stress:

--Slow Yourself Down--

Watch for signs that the stress has gotten to the point where your emotions feel like they are in chaos and your head is 'spinning'.

--Breathe Before Reacting--

Consciously take some breaths to calm yourself before you react in a negative way towards the people most dear to you.

--Focus On How You Are Experiencing Yourself--

Allow yourself to become aware of your emotions - don't judge, just acknowledge and accept that emotions come and go and that they are yours to deal with.

--Become Aware Of Your Thoughts About Yourself--

Realize what you're creating and repeating in your head and how this affects your actions. Getting caught in a negative "spinning cycle" can keep you from taking positive action. There can always be at least one positive aspect about yourself you can appreciate and focus on. For some it may be "I know I will never give up." Or "no matter what happens I will protect and cherish the relationships I have with my spouse and family." Reminding yourself of these positive aspects of yourself and your life can begin the switch from hopelessness and despair to taking positive action regardless how small.

--Look At Your Internal Assets--

What do you bring to the relationship and to your children? It could be a commitment not to give up on them, it could be the courage to share your fears, disappointments, and hopes about yourself with your partner instead of trying to hide and deny them. It could be the strength not to give in to despair, but to focus on being creative in a financial crisis along with your spouse and family.

--Make A Commitment To Your Family--

Decide how you are going to be with family members during times of crisis or stress. Keep in mind that your marriage is not your pay check or house. You may lose money but that does not mean losing the internal assets that you have with your spouse or partner that make a marriage.

In the end you can be responsible for how you are going to be in your family. You can continue contributing to your family from your personal assets regardless of external changes and stress.