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10 financial warning signs to watch out for when in a relationship

BY [RIJU MEHTA](#), ET BUREAU | UPDATED: FEB 17, 2020, 08.42 AM IST

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With a heady Valentine's and a deadly Virus in the air, immunity against either would seem difficult. Yet, a simple way to keep heartbreak and ill health at bay would be to spot the symptoms and sidestep these on time. Like [love](#) and malaise, [money](#) too can spawn misery, especially when it comes to relationships. And much in the same manner, you can avoid anguish by watching out for [warning](#) signs.

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Given that money conflicts are often cited as a prime reason for divorce, it would appear elementary to identify and resolve these while dating. Yet, money is often the last thing on a cavorting couple's mind while seeking compatibility. Even as the [dating](#) duo seeks similarities in personalities and habits, they refuse to look for common [financial](#) ground. "To sustain a [relationship](#), it is important for a couple to be on the same page when it comes to financial values," says Mrin Agarwal, Founder & Director, Finsafe. These would include the same outlook on saving, spending, investing risks, loans, and approach to goals, among other things.

It can be argued that since the root of most financial conflicts lies in the person's psyche, a personality match can take care of money fracas. However, most complex and insidious traits that tend to remain hidden in daily interactions, emerge with ease in financial dealings. So it is easier to identify these if you are on the lookout for financial red flags. For instance, trying to dictate financial behaviour to a partner or looking down upon his or her spending choices is a clear indicator of deep-seated complexes or psychological issues. It is best to separate from such a partner while dating instead of wracking your head over the issue after marriage.

Besides, these red flags will serve as a beacon for a mind muddled by sentiment. Love may be a haze that heightens your senses, but it can also cloud your reasoning. "When you are in love or in the early stage of dating, you tend to believe and justify everything about your partner," says Agarwal. This story, then, is meant to serve as a red alert for the hormonally hampered couples so that they can find financial focus.

We list for you some of the common and not-so-obvious financial red flags—actions, habits and behaviour patterns—that can hint at bigger problems you may or may not be able to rectify in the future. These dating alerts are intended to help you put a finger to the problem and take remedial measures to secure your finances and relationship. We also tell you whether a behaviour or money situation warrants a break-up or not. So even as you enjoy your love-fuelled outings, keep an eye open for these red flags.

1. Refuses to split money on outings

If, even after the first four or five dates, your partner shows little inclination to share the expenses, take it as a sign of things to come. Either (s)he is not serious about the relationship or expects to be financially supported by you for the rest of his or her life. "When we started going out last year and the bill was presented to Yash each time, I used to get irritated," says Snehal Ravasia, the 30-year-old investment banker, who started dating in August last year and is set to marry him this month. They either split the bill or alternated between paying these.

Unwillingness to split money not only reflects scant respect for the partner's commitment and money, but could also point at a person who is not earning too well or saving enough. He could even be a freeloader who is not fully invested in the relationship. If this continues for long, it's a good idea to move on.



Yash and Snehal, Mumbai

Yash Sotta, 35, Marketing manager: For the wedding, we openly talked about our individual resources and agreed on how much we would spend.

Money personality: Impulsive spender, stable job, risk-taker

Snehal Ravasia, 30, Investment banker

Money personality: Planner, saver, conservative investor

Sweet spots:

- Both share same financial values.
- Are splitting expenses for the impending wedding.
- Open to suggestions about each other's financial habits.

Red flags: Spending and saving habits could pose a challenge.

Scope for improvement?

Need to build more financial assets and share information in greater detail.

2. Lies about money

Lying is a form of financial infidelity that can destroy a relationship. If your date has lied to you about sundry things, this behaviour can stretch to finances as well. It can range from small lies like hiding cash to bigger ones like concealing debt, lying about salary, and secret purchases or accounts. It can have serious consequences like upsetting the budget, or failure to meet goals like retirement. Lying typically springs from guilt or is an act of rebellion against the other partner's controlling behaviour, or simple fear about the partner's reaction to an impulsive act.

Also read: [What your date's money traits can tell you](#)

Can you live with financial deception in your partner? "You can tolerate differences in financial values only up to a point. There are some traits you are born with, while other issues are too deep-seated to be rectified by talking and discussing," says Agarwal. So be realistic about salvaging the situation, talk to the partner more often and don't try to force your way in the relationship. If you see an improvement and can ignore minor lies about spending, continue. If not, move on.



Mohsin and Aanchal, Delhi

Mohsin Iqbal, 27, Marketing manager

Money personality: Planner, saver, good communicator

Aanchal Dahiya, 24, Content developer: *He keeps advising me on the need to spend less and save more, but explains patiently and is never rude or angry about it.*

Money personality: Spender, self-sufficient, disciplined about payments

Sweet spots:

No secrets, easy communication about money.

Fair split of money on outings.

Not dependent on parents or each other.

Red flags: *One is a saver, the other spender. Could lead to friction later.*

Scope for improvement?

Should start building assets, save for goals like marriage.

3. Refuses to talk about finances

A big red flag to keep your eyes peeled for is a partner's refusal to discuss finances even after you have been going around for a few years and are serious about taking your relationship to the next level. "Reluctance to talk about money in the initial stages of dating is natural; in fact, it would be awkward if someone displayed too keen an interest in your finances right at the beginning," says Taresh Bhatia, Certified Financial Planner.

However, displaying an unwillingness, irritability or anger while talking about money even after a few years of dating is a definite warning sign. "Typically after marriage, most men are hesitant to share information about finances, be it income, expenditure or investments," says Agarwal.

Refusal to discuss could spring from a desire to retain financial control in partnership, or due to embarrassment about failed investments, or the sheer inability to manage money and admitting it to the partner. If a man earns less than a woman, the reluctance to talk could be from a feeling of insecurity or an act of rebellion. It would, however, be foolish if you detect this behaviour early on and do not take definitive action.

If the refusal is due to controlling behaviour, it's best to split because the nature is unlikely to change and could be damaging for your

mental and financial health. If you have tried talking several times without any progress, try counselling. If that doesn't work or the partner refuses to go for it, it is best to snap the bond and move on.



Viraj and Khyati, Mumbai

Viraj Shah, 26, Businessperson

Money personality: Disciplined about debt and bill payments, careful spender

Khyati Vasa, 26, Businessperson: *We are on the same financial wavelength since we have known each other for eight years and talk out our differences.*

Money personality: Financially aware, disciplined investor

Sweet spots:

Both consult each other about their purchases.

Don't go overboard on gifts, giving only what the other needs or wants.

Work together, have no debts.

Red flags: *Disagreements over going overboard in shopping and eating out.*

Scope for improvement?

Should start taking investment decisions together, set up financial goals.

4. Has no assets despite years of work

If your partner has been working for 4-5 years and has no asset, physical or financial, see it as a red flag. "If a young, single earner is not investing at least 50% of his salary, has not formulated goals and is not saving for them, it should serve as a warning," says Bhatia. It shows financial irresponsibility and lack of planning, and could lead to poor money management or inability to meet financial goals after marriage.

While it's unfair to expect someone at the start of his career to buy a house or a car, (s)he should have financial assets, such as mutual fund investments or fixed deposits. These hint at foresight and willingness to plan for goals. "We are paying for our wedding from our savings," says Yash Sotta, 35, a marketing manager in Mumbai. He also has his own car and camera equipment. Even depreciating assets like a bike or laptop bought with one's money should be seen as a positive sign of earning capacity and financial independence.

5. Borrows frequently from you or parents

Do you dislike month-ends because your partner invariably seeks a handout to help sail through the month? If (s)he frequently runs out

of money and looks for financial help or bridge loans from you or his own parents, it's best to be cautious. While a rare financial crisis is understandable, it is not acceptable to live beyond one's means and spend more than you earn, on a regular basis. Such chaotic money management and lack of budgeting will not allow you to save and eventually derail your financial goals.

"I have a much lower income compared to my boyfriend's, and I often go overboard with my shopping. So I feel the need to borrow from him and my parents every month, but I never do it," says Aanchal Dahiya, a 24-year-old Delhiite, who is learning to save, thanks to the gentle prodding from her partner.

Also read: [7 money signs you are dating the wrong person](#)

6. Can't retain a job for long

Kolkata-based Sharad Kumar is into his seventh job in five years and, at ₹25,000 a month, it's not the most high-paid of salaries as well. "I have expertise in a niche field that has very few takers at present," explains the 29-year-old. Little wonder then that his fiancée's parents had an issue about him marrying their daughter. It is indeed a matter of concern if your partner is unable to hold on to a job for long.

It could indicate not only a lack of professionalism or expertise in the chosen field, but also an inability to cohabit or get along with co-workers. This is unlikely to bode well for a long-term relationship, besides the fact that a stunted career growth may not result in financial stability after marriage. This could spark fights and force you to split. It's better to take a call on this issue before marriage and part ways if there is unlikely to be an improvement in the partner's career prospects.

7. Expensive gifts, flashy lifestyle

"We have never given each other gifts that are not needed or are unlikely to be used," says the Mumbai-based businessperson Khyati Vasa, 26. Her boyfriend of eight years, Viraj Shah, is in complete agreement.

"If your partner is giving expensive gifts and taking you to fancy places even though he doesn't have a high income, you should question it," says Bhatia. It could point at a spendthrift nature which may be difficult to change. You may think he will tone down after marriage, but it will not happen, adds Bhatia.

You should also pay attention to his lifestyle, the kind of clothes and accessories he wears or the vehicle he drives, as these may hint at an extravagant lifestyle that is not commensurate with his salary. Listen carefully to how he talks about money as well. "If he is only talking about how he wants to spend, not about how he wants to save or invest, be wary," says Bhatia.

8. Is always late for payments

Not paying your credit card bills on time and in full, being late for utility payments or missing insurance premiums or loan EMIs are all indicative of a lazy, procrastinating or a disorganised person. These traits could prove to be the nemesis for a partner who wants to lead a stable, organised financial life and reach one's goals without hiccups.

It may seem like a frustrating habit to get used to in a partner, but can be remedied. "I have automated all my bill payments, except for the credit card, which I pay in full and on time," says Sotta. So, while you need to be cautious about such a partner, it should not be a cause for splitting.

9. Dictates financial behaviour

One of the worst personality traits that should put you on an instant alert is manipulative behaviour in a partner. Does your date dictate how you should save or spend, what you should buy or wear, where you should invest? If you try to contradict him or have your own way with money, does he react violently, sulking for days?

If your answer to any of these questions is a 'yes', it is an unambiguous cue for you to get out of the relationship at the earliest. "If you allow your date to plan your finances even before marriage, you will have no freedom, financial or otherwise, afterwards," says Agarwal.

"Mohsin is never rude or forces me to cut on my spending, but explains very gently why I need to curb it," says Dahiya of her boyfriend. It's the reason she has decided to start saving and be more careful about how she spends.

10. Follows investing tips blindly

You can't expect to know all about your partner's investing habits right after you start dating. However, if you see him take advice on markets or other investment avenues from all and sundry, and follow it blindly, sit back and think.

If a person does not have the expertise to invest and follows market tips or tax advice from unprofessional sources, it is a surefire way of

losing money. While it is not a big enough reason to dump your date, you should sit together to have a talk on how approaching a financial adviser may be a better option. If he agrees, you are good to go.

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