

SPECIAL SECTION

THE
TOWN & COUNTRY
GUIDE TO

WOMEN AND WEALTH

You can't live happily ever after
if you don't take care of your money—
it's as simple as that.
Here's what you need to know.

BY JOANNA L. KROTZ

Romancing the Prenup

While cohabitation agreements are on the rise (owing to later and multiple marriages and same-sex partnerships), asking for one still seems to telegraph that you're greedy or lack faith in the union. Translation: you don't really love me. "Drafting a prenup that will govern finances in the event of death or breakup tends to throw a wet blanket over the fantasy of walking into the sunset," explains Arlene G. Dubin, a New York City matrimonial lawyer (212-554-7651; mosessinger.com). Dubin's first marriage lasted twelve years; her divorce proceedings took seven. After drafting a prenup helped her to trust enough to marry again, she decided to write a book on such contracts. Her title, *Prenups for Lovers* (Villard), is hardly tongue-in-cheek. Dubin keeps her prenup in a Tiffany bowl, along with other wedding mementos.

So how do you create a fair and effective agreement? First, commit to honesty and full disclosure. "The longer you wait, the harder it is," says Dubin. To begin, talk about values, lifestyle and expectations about who will be supporting whom. Figure out exactly what you want to cover, including all property and assets, and what will happen to those assets in the event of death, divorce or long-term illness. Also keep this advice in mind:

Don't assume that a will and a prenup do the same things. Individuals draft wills, but two people sign legally enforceable prenup contracts.

"You should each be represented by separate counsel," says adviser Patricia Angus, of Shelterwood Financial, in order to achieve an enforceable agreement. Prenups are governed by state law, so make sure your lawyers have local experience.

A key issue is what happens after childbearing. If a woman stays home or scales back her career, the agreement ought to address issues such as greater spousal support or the economic reality of reentering the workforce.

Finally, start several months or a year in advance so that there's no pressure before the wedding.

(fool.com) or on TV networks with business programs, such as CNBC. See how what you think jibes with what you read or hear.

- Start trading with the money you've earmarked.
- If you'd rather keep this discreet, it's easy. Set up an account with an online-trading brokerage, such as TDAmeritrade.com, CharlesSchwab.com or Fidelity.com.

Lesson Four: SHARE THE DECISIONS

"WOMEN OFTEN run the checkbooks, but they don't get involved in the overall picture," says Botanica Capital's Rosalie Wolf, who has been a financial executive at such organizations as International Paper, Bankers Trust and the Rockefeller Foundation. Such abdication can have scary pitfalls. "The person in charge will do what he thinks is right, not what she thinks," Wolf explains. "Even when women earn more money than their men, they cede control because most men feel better if they are in charge."

Minneapolis music producer and philanthropic consultant Marian Moore knows this all too well. When she was eighteen, she came into a sizable family inheritance (her great-grandfather was a pioneering corporate tycoon). Eventually, Moore married a commercial fisherman and builder who didn't have much money, and they had three kids. Now fifty-one, divorced and cofounder of a philanthropic consultancy, Play Big (playbig.ca), she says: "When you're the one with the wealth, it's outside the cultural norm. It's really tricky because it's easy to slip into the enabling role." Choosing her words carefully, Moore says she had to decide between "giving the man money" and "sharing the checkbook to balance the power." For her marriage, "trying to ignore the power dynamic" did not work.

How can you resolve money tensions within a relationship? Surprise, surprise: you need to communicate. "It's all about being conscious and having the difficult conversations," says Moore.

Many advisers suggest that couples make a formal date to talk about their financial health at least once a year, say, when the New Year rolls around. When you start your conversation, make

MARITAL STATUS

- Married (once): 44.5%
- Single, never married: 16.5%
- Married (more than once): 15.9%
- Separated or divorced: 12.9%
- Living with partner: 5.6%
- Widowed: 3.0%
- In a domestic partnership/civil union: 0.6%

HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?

