



Kissing the Ugly

Since my early teens I have searched to find the truth about success, and I have been advising people on their finances and managing global investment portfolios for over 25 years. I welcome your questions and hope my answers can help you feel happier, more successful, and more at ease about your finances.

My fiancée wants an expensive wedding and plans to double our original budget. I want to give her the special day she's been dreaming of, but this amount of money could be a down payment on a house! Since we can't afford this anyway, how can I convince her to compromise?

If money was no constraint, I think you might say “fine” to a big wedding to give her the day of her dreams. If so, this is not about money, it is about options and values. I suspect that you don't want to even look at a big and expensive wedding as an option, but you must go there, because it is the right thing to do. Relationship communication is not about convincing. It is about communicating your goals, fears, and desires — and hopefully rooting them in reality. In other words, explore your options, and do a reality check. The process is what I call “kissing the ugly.”

First, I would sit down and define exactly what her ideal wedding would look like. What location? How many guests? What kind of food and flowers exactly? Second, figure out how much that wedding will cost. Third, figure out what resources you have to pay for it. What do you have in savings? How much can you borrow (and still have money left over for beans and tofu)? Will parents/grandparents help?

After looking at your available resources for the Big Expensive Wedding, ask your fiancée to come up with

some “What else could we do with all that money?” ideas. Will paying for the wedding make getting a home/ having kids/ getting your master's/ starting the yoga studio that much further away? Will it mean a smaller house? If she thinks this is a fair tradeoff, then fine, have a big wedding. Life is a long time. It is okay to retire three years later because of the big wedding, as long as you know that this is true, based on your cost analysis.



Big or small, extravagant or intimate, what's important is that you and your fiancée declare your sacred loving commitment to each other. The rest is pure fluff for everyone else. I would love to hear how this all turns out. Please send photos!

My husband and I have been married for five years but we're still plodding along at entry-level positions and don't have more than a couple thousand saved for emergencies. At 29 years old, I'm feeling like my prime childbearing years are slipping away. How will I know when we're financially able to have a baby?

I am a guy who writes on finance and believes in planning, but when it comes to kids, money is less important than values or you and your partner's said and unsaid “mental maps” of what parenting and family life mean. I say this because there is no “right” in this kids thing. The main

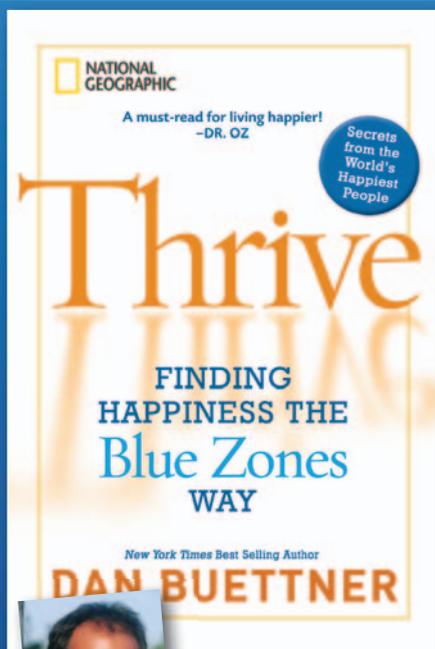
question that you need to chat with your spouse about is, what do you want for your kids? Independence, happiness, resilience, compassion, optimism, creativity, and cooperative skills — or envy, greediness, self-absorption, insensitivity, bigotry, intolerance, hate, and helplessness? Whatever your values, that will be reflected in your parenting. Most of us carry the cross of how we were raised. For example, some parents would not think of not paying for their kids' college, while others say, "I put myself through school, just like my mom did, and it made me what I am today." I know an equal number of happy, responsible, compassionate good citizens who had Mom and Dad pay 100 percent or 0 percent of their college expenses (or who chose another option besides college altogether) and can find no anecdotal evidence that life success is better or worse, depending on who paid for college. The hard part is the discussions about values and what you want for your kids.

So, long answer to short question is: the finance part is easy. Once you know what you want, then you just do

it. Of course, it really is not easy, nor is it simple. Adding children is a big deal. If you have family, see what support they will give. Some will give time; others might help pay for childcare and school costs; others will just say you're dummies for thinking you can raise kids on a shoestring and do it right. Three books I would suggest for you to read: *Children are from Heaven*, *The Optimistic Child*, and *Virtue of Wealth*. Read those three books, and I think you'll feel empowered. Your kids are already lucky; many parents spend more time thinking about which car to buy than their not-yet-physically-conceived children.

Paul Sutherland is president of Financial & Investment Management Group. See excerpts from his best-selling book *Zenvesting*, as well as his latest book, *The Virtue of Wealth*, at SpiritualityHealthbooks.com. To ask a question or chat, contact him at Paul@SpiritualityHealth.com.

This column is not designed to give complete financial, accounting, legal, or regulatory advice.



Dan Buettner, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Blue Zones*

WHO in the WORLD is HAPPY?

The answers may surprise you.

In his new book on happiness, longevity expert Dan Buettner identifies the world's happiness hotspots and reveals the secrets to living a more fulfilling life. Discover how you can make smart choices to help you thrive at home, at work, and in your community.

"A must-read for living happier!" —Dr. Oz

"Buettner elegantly shares insights in how to live a happy and fulfilling life that will ultimately create world well-being." —Deepak Chopra

"Read this book! It will open your mind to a deeper understanding of the roots of happiness, and thrill you to learn we have a choice to thrive!" —Goldie Hawn

AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD
nationalgeographic.com/books

