

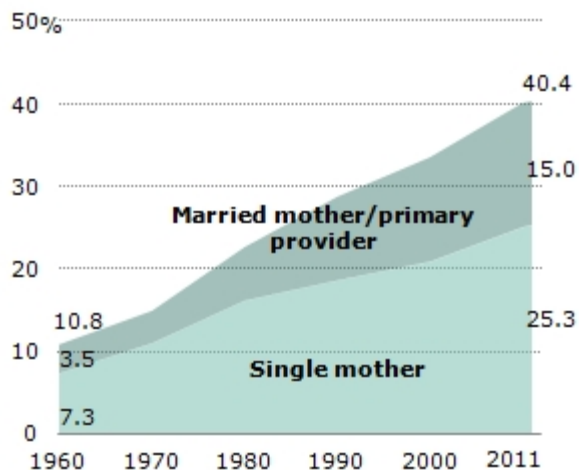
When It Comes To Financial Matters: Do Women Need Special Handling?

The stories pour out by the bucketful, when it comes to financial planning and investing, “Women have different needs than men.” In an effort to upset as many marketing gurus and brokers as possible, I submit that there are far more similarities than differences and the differences are subtleties, not profound. That being said, the impact of those subtleties can be significant and profound. I have read countless articles pointing to the assertion that women’s needs are so different that truly only another woman can have the ability to meet those needs. While I will not argue the fact that there are differences- I don’t use my wife’s soap or razors- I find that there are far more similarities than differences.

Let’s start with the greatest areas of similarities, both men and women share a deep and profound desire for:

Mother as the Sole or Primary Provider: 1960-2011

% based on households with children under age 18



Note: Single mothers include mothers who are never married, divorced, widowed, separated, or married but the spouse is not in the household.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the Decennial Census and American Community Surveys (ACS) Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) files

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1. Financial security
2. A level of understanding on a course or direction for their financial lives
3. Choices and options in their lives

4. An ability to attain financial independence and well-being

The differences/subtleties lie chiefly in areas such as;

1. Familiarity with financial terms (although this might be more illusion than reality in many cases)
2. The way each communicates about money (this may or may not be gender-based, but more about one's money history)
3. Openness to ask questions-face it, women, you are typically much more willing to admit what you don't know -Bravo! While many men put on the act.
4. Financial Control, while this tends to be more male dominated, I have seen the opposite on many occasions.

So what do women AND men need, when it comes to financial advice?

Conceptually, it's simple. To be effective with each gender, an advisor must:

1. Listen better to each by providing an atmosphere that supports open and non-judgmental communications. Too many advisors are in the "tell" domineering mode.
2. Ask better questions-be specific, clear and jargon-free. When I go to a doctor, I don't want to hear the Latin name for my ailment, nor the chemical compound for the prescription-give it to me in plain English
3. Give clients permission to NOT know something. I make it clear that my skill sets typically does not include what the client does (I am not a doctor, mechanic, school teacher, homemaker, attorney, IT specialist, etc.) so it's perfectly understandable if they don't have the same knowledge or experience that I have in regard to financial planning.
4. Watch for non-verbal clues of understanding and connection. Body language tells a very big story-an area where most planners fall short.
5. Realize and accept that men and women might process information differently; some are more linear thinkers and others might take a more circuitous route to putting concepts together.
6. If you do not understand what the advisor is trying to convey-it's their fault not yours, and your job is to say so.

The old adage, "people are people" tells the tale fairly well for me. The person sitting next to me at the meeting table has questions, fears, desires, goals, needs, constraints and limitations-regardless of whether they are sporting an X or a Y chromosome.