



TERESA BRUNSTING

AS FOR ME AND MY FINANCES



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Beware: Impulse Buying Can Wreak Havoc!

I am a 60-something Christian woman with an experience to share as a warning. I live in a small town in Iowa with my husband. We have two adult children. This town is picture-perfect; however, I am not picture-perfect. At the age of 23, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I gradually learned how to live and even flourish, but it wasn't always easy.

I had never been good at finance. So, why am I writing this article, you might ask? I want to talk to you about a topic that I am very familiar with: spending.

You may not know this but those with bipolar can be in a state called hypomania which can create a euphoric feeling, and impulse buying and spending can be one of the results. I am an expert on what not to do and I will weave in what I have learned as best practices over the years with the help of my husband.

I have experiential and tacit knowledge, which is based on informal knowledge, learned over time, and usually applied to a specific situation. The situation is finance. I ask you to pay attention. Even if this doesn't affect you, it could affect someone you know and love.

While writing this article, I asked my husband, Doug, what he thought was most important in finance. His answer was, "Communication." You see, we married in our thirties, and both had our spending habits. The big mistake that began in our marriage was not talking and planning our finances. We were so separate in that area. We were both making our own money. We had separate accounts and separate spending habits, which would eventually not be able to co-exist. Doug knew when we got married that I was diagnosed bipolar, but I don't think either one of us knew all that it involved.

For years in our marriage, we tried to communicate but there was increasing emotion involved, and this made our communication even worse. I can't help but think, if we had simply laid it all on the table from the beginning and planned together with God's blessing, what a difference that would have made.

How do I know this? After years of struggling in our marriage with finances and my impulsive spending, we were a mess. We finally put it all on the table and began to work out our financial difficulties. We talked to several friends, and I confessed my impulsive spending habits. We realized a joint account was a good idea for us because it forced us to look at our finances together. I am not saying it is right for everyone because some function perfectly well with separate accounts. But I could hardly trust myself to be responsible at certain times, so I knew it was the right thing for us.

Buying online is far too easy and with one click you can have something arrive at your door. If I had all the money in the world, maybe that wouldn't be a problem but instead, I used credit cards. This was another big mistake for me because I had impulse control problems. My husband wasn't aware of how out of control that could get. And it may sound unreal, but I hadn't grasped it either. It was too easy when I was in a euphoric state.

Fast forward to the present time and we do communicate and manage our finances together, and I can tell you a few do's and don'ts of money. For the longest time when we argued about money in our marriage, I thought it was a personal attack. I would think that Doug cared more about money than me but now I realize he was trying to be a good husband and look out for our future. He was trying to be a good steward and help me to do the same.

We still have a few credit card balances to this day. I hate to look at them because I know this could have been prevented or at least slowed down by better communication and an understanding of exactly what was going on. If you aren't married, then maybe a financial advisor or friend could help if you struggle with finances.

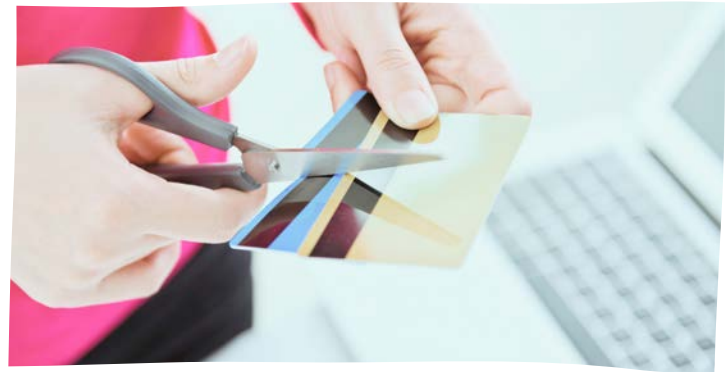
"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)



Whether you have this type of impulsivity or not, here are five don'ts and five dos gleaned from my personal experience.

5 Don'ts: Bad Financial Practices

1. Don't let emotion control your spending habits. (You may need to have an accountability partner or friend.)
2. Don't buy immediately.
3. Don't buy because you are trying to keep up with others.
4. Don't lie about your spending.
5. Don't forget what the bible says about stewardship and money.



5 Dos: Good Financial Practices

1. Create and stick to a budget. If you are married, do it together, "communicate."
2. Monitor your spending regularly so you spend within your means. Note: The envelope system works; use envelopes to reinforce your budget by putting the budgeted amount of cash into envelopes. When it is gone, it is gone, and you can see what is happening. See Ramsey's How to Budget with the Cash Envelope System: <https://www.ramseysolutions.com/budgeting/envelope-system-explained>
3. Add a 24-hour window before you buy and ask yourself if it is a want or a need. Pray for God's help in your finances during this time.
4. Set financial goals for your future and put money away for an emergency fund and retirement accounts.
5. Give generously to causes that are close to your heart.



Getting a grasp on finances includes making a conscious effort to be grateful for what God has given and to be a good steward, first giving to others. Gratitude and giving should be an overall theme in your finances. Allow these two themes in money to replace pride and other emotions that can influence bad spending habits and you will be well on your way to a brighter and more financially secure future. Start to be intentional with your money and ask God for guidance and forgiveness about spending if necessary. A story like this can happen in small town USA or anywhere.

"The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty." Proverbs 21:5 (NIV)

“

Choose my
instruction instead of
silver, knowledge
rather than choice
gold,
for wisdom is more
precious than rubies;
nothing you desire
can compare with her.

”

PROVERBS 8 10-11 (NIV)



COACHING OPTIONS

WOMEN

Wonder where you fit in...

LOOKING FOR PURPOSE

want to do more?

"You're not alone and I can help."

[Learn More](#)

MOTHERS

Feel like you are alone...

OVERWHELMED & OVERWORKED

when you have so much to offer?

"Don't give up, I can help."

[Learn More](#)

MARRIAGES

Wish you felt comfortable...

MOVING FORWARD

but you don't, so you feel stuck?

"I get it, but I can help."

[Learn More](#)