

Financial signs of an affair

By Vanessa Santilli

Suspecting your partner of infidelity can cause a lot of emotional strife. How can you know for sure? Late nights at the office or evenings out with the girls may be completely innocent.

But if you've got a sinking feeling, there are signs you can look out for. Beyond lipstick on his collar or the smell of an unusual cologne in her hair, your finances may hold clues. Here are five signals that your better half might be using his money -- and yours -- to keep another person happy.



1. Mysterious charges

"The most obvious sign would be charges for places or gifts that you never received," says Christine White, a money coach with Money Coaches Canada. Finances often show patterns of behaviour, from where people eat and go for drinks after work to where they get gas, she adds.

If you find receipts for fancy restaurants you haven't been to or notice a suspicious charge to a jewelry store in your credit card statement, you might want to confront your partner.

2. Desire to separate finances

While many devoted couples keep separate finances, a sudden impulse to change the status of your accounts -- with no apparent reason -- may be a red flag, says Certified Financial Planner Tina Tehranchian. If your partner decides to open a separate bank account or apply for an individual credit card when these have always been joint before, find out if there is a valid explanation.

3. Evasive behaviour

A cheating spouse may be more secretive or evasive about finances, suggests Elena Jara, director of education at Credit Canada Debt Solutions Inc. "For example, one asks a question [about the other's finances] and they change the subject, along with not letting you see credit card statements or any statements."

Or you may notice changes in your phone bill, such as an uptick in mobile data or voice time that your partner fails to explain.

4. Missed payments

There may also be a lot of cash advances or missed bill payments if your partner's money is being used elsewhere, adds Jara.

Your partner may feel pressured to keep his new interest happy, especially if she threatens to go public with the affair if he doesn't buy her what she wants. He may use his bill money to placate her, or take out a cash advance or even open a new credit card in order to pay for everything.

5. New clothes

If you notice that your partner is wearing lots of new clothing and jewellery but your monthly spending has not increased, this could be a sign that she is receiving gifts from someone else, says Tehranchian.

Or if your partner is buying a new style of clothing or jewellery, someone else could be influencing her taste or pressuring her to look different.

Don't jump the gun

"While none of these signs in and of itself may mean your significant other is necessarily cheating, they could indicate there are serious issues in the relationship that need to be addressed," Tehranchian says.

A sudden interest in physical appearance happens for so many reasons other than a new relationship, such as a new job or promotion, adds Andre Bolduc, trustee in bankruptcy and senior vice-president at BDO Canada Limited.

And mysterious purchases on your credit card are the first sign of identity theft. Look at your entire statement carefully and see where the charges happened and how many unexplained charges are listed.

What to do if the worst is true

Communication is key, says Henrietta Ross, CEO and executive director of the Canadian Association of Credit Counselling Services. "Talk about it openly and honestly together to try to understand the issues. Then, focus on ways to resolve the situation."

If you are certain your partner is being unfaithful, it may be time to seek professional help. "Consult a financial adviser on how to protect the family finances in order to not be responsible for any debt the significant other may incur," says Ross.

It's also essential to understand your numbers, adds White. "Get the facts and get a grip on your family's cash flow, debt and assets. Understand what is joint and what is separate, and everything coming in, everything going out. With most banks, online banking is great for checking transaction histories."