

Women Talk Money

How Smart Women Can Make Wise Financial Decisions

By Ashleigh Eisbrener



Ellen Rogin, CPA, CFP

Women are just as capable controlling their money as men are...so why don't they? Is it due to intimidation, schedule, responsibility or control?

Ellen Rogin, CPA, CFP, president of Strategic Financial Designs and author of book *Great with Money: The Woman's Guide to Prosperity*, has been working with people and their money for over 20 years. Starting her professional career as an auditor at a large public accounting firm, she decided to stop looking to the past and starting playing a more proactive role in helping people plan for the future. Specifically, women.

She drew a specific interest to the relationship between women and money, recognizing that most women don't express a strong knowledge of their finances. "I have worked with hundreds of women over the years who are very bright," she says, "yet [they are] inexperienced when it comes to managing their money." Ellen observed that many women are either thrown into handling their money, through divorce or inheritance, or haven't found the time to educate themselves because of their busy careers.

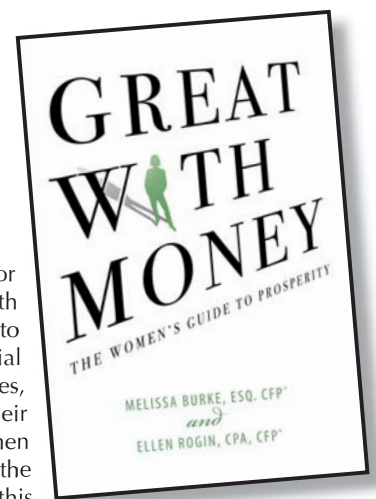
The most difficult step is getting women to take action. "Most women realize that they must be involved," Ellen says. "Now, realizing this and actually taking action are two different things." Some women are still resistant to taking complete responsibility of their financial lives. But Ellen continues to stress the importance. "Eleven out of 12 women will end up living without their husbands," she says. "Even if a woman is happily married, she will likely need to handle her own finances at some point in her adult life."

Ellen and her friend, Melissa Burke, share a similar view of money that they felt women across the world could benefit from. So they put it into print. Their book, *Great with Money*, starts with a broad view of prosperity and wealth that goes beyond just dollars and cents. It includes giving, balance, strong relationships and a successful life. "Money is a tool to use in life to help achieve goals for yourself, your family and your community," Ellen says.

By reading this book, women will learn that within themselves they can find the power to understand money and change their viewpoint on money. With this knowledge, women can transform their lives. "They will learn how to think their way to financial success," she says. "Women will learn ways to change thoughts of scarcity to thoughts of abundance, even in turbulent times." Making financial decisions will be easier, and women will gain confidence and control.

Ellen's goal is for women to not only understand the basics of money, but to learn how to take this knowledge and make a difference in

their world. She and Co-author Melissa hope that with *Great with Money*, women will be inspired to go big and bold with their financial impact for not only themselves, but for their families and their communities as well. "Women control more than 80 percent of the buying decisions in all homes in this country," she says. "We believe they can make a huge impact in the world, not just in the mall."



Below, Ellen Rogin further discusses the relationship between women and money and how to get by during these rough economic times.

Women and Money

Suburban Woman: What strengths do women have when it comes to money?

Ellen: It is difficult to generalize about all women. Studies have shown that women are very good investors, although many don't know this. They tend to do research before they make decisions; they are less impulsive than men, therefore take less risks and trade less. And as a result, some studies have shown that their investment results are better than their male counterparts. They also tend to be very comfortable asking for advice. This can lead to their gathering more information to make more informed financial decisions.

SW: What weaknesses do women face in regards to money?

Ellen: Many women have little education or experience with respect to managing their money. As a result, often their confidence may be low. I have seen that through education and practical experience women are able to reduce their stress levels and increase their ability to have money work beautifully in their lives.

SW: What is the biggest challenge women face when changing how they handle their finances?

Ellen: Believing that they can be great with money...for many, money management, investment decisions and future planning can seem scary and difficult. Once women believe that it can be interesting and that it is much less complex than they imagined, they can step into taking control of their financial lives.

SW: How can women overcome the barriers that prevent them from pursuing prosperity?

Ellen: One exercise that is helpful is to review your money history. How was money handled in your home growing up? Did it seem plentiful or scarce? Was money discussed or was it taboo? Exploring your money upbringing can assist in better understanding what your current beliefs are today. In addition, on our web site www.begreatwithmoney.com there is a survey to assess where you fall on the abundance or scarcity meter.

SW: How should women who want to be smart with money start?

Ellen: Getting organized and clearing clutter around finances is a wonderful place to start. When we have financial messes in our lives it keeps us stuck. By first clearing paper clutter (all those statements we receive), then emotional clutter (all those negative thoughts about money), we can have renewed energy to take charge with our money.

SW: What special tips do you have for women to help them achieve success with money?

Ellen: Be willing to do what it takes to be a success. This may mean learning more by taking classes and reading, or it may mean asking for help from a friend or professional. People are very secretive with their money and as a result often are left to manage things on their own. Input from someone you trust will assist you in making smart decisions.

Money in Today's Economy

SW: What do women need to know about their money during a bad economy?

Ellen: It is more important than ever to have a clear idea about what it really takes to run your lifestyle. This may take some heavy lifting to accurately calculate what you spend each month – but this is crucial. Most people don't know or underestimate what they really spend. Now is a time to assess what you are doing and make sure that all of your spending is deliberate and on things that you really value. A program like Quicken™ can assist in this process and will enable you to keep track of your spending going forward.

SW: What is the most important thing women should do with their money during these hard times?

Ellen: Everyone's situation is different, but people with cash reserves are now feeling more comfortable than those without a cushion. We have known for years that it is good planning to have emergency reserves. Now people see why having a cash cushion is necessary.

SW: Do you suggest women still invest their money during a bad economy?

Ellen: It depends upon each woman's individual situation, such as asset levels, age, employment etc. I do believe that over the long run markets rebound, and this downturn will turn around. If someone has a long time horizon before they need their money, it may make sense for them to be adding money in increments to their investment portfolio. I do still believe in the benefits of investing in retirement plans – almost everyone does better with an automatic savings plan, such as a 401k plan. Each woman will need to evaluate her own situation to determine how to invest the money once it is in the plan.

SW: Are there still ways to make money in a bad market?

Ellen: It makes sense to pay down credit cards if possible. If you are paying 18 percent interest – there aren't many investments that can beat that return right now.