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**Nathaniel:** [00:00:15] It becomes a big fight and we try to make up at the end of the night, but it adds up. We're living month to month. And I didn't think it was going to be like that before we got married. If you want me to provide, we've got to downgrade. I can't keep providing a lifestyle that we can't afford.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:00:35] Meet Jessica and Nathaniel. Jessica grew up rich, but now she and Nathaniel are struggling to make ends meet.

**Jessica:** [00:00:42] Because I have two kids, a husband, I have a dog. I'm doing everything like to stay afloat. Like I just want to be able to commit. Like I want just to be able to pay the rent, to pay the food, to pay the schools. Sorry. So. I'm scared to look at my bank account, because it's like it's diminishing every day.

**Nathaniel:** [00:01:06] I keep telling her that I didn't move to New York to be a taxi. I was told, be a taxi if you have to, do whatever it takes, work in a bakery, after work, go to your another job, and do your night job, and do whatever it takes to provide for the family. But I work hard. I know I work hard. I have a limit to what I'm going to do. People think in Montreal, where I came from, they think I married into big money, and now, I have it good, I'm set up for life, but it's really not like that at all. How do you feel like, honey? I know it's hard. We can work it out together. We could give it a chance. We could make things work out.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:01:56] Jessica and Nathaniel have been married for five years, and Jessica has a simple request. Her husband, Nathaniel, runs his own business, and even though he's been struggling, she wants him to contribute to their joint expenses, even if it's just a hundred bucks a month. Now, do you think that's the real issue here? As you listen to the two of them, listen to the resentment, listen to their communication styles, listen to the constant spinning and repeating. There are clues upon clues here.

**Jessica:** [00:02:32] When I first got married, I never thought about finances. I'm not going to say that I was spoiled. It's not like I went out and I bought now this, whatever,

but I did have a nice life. When I got married, the first two years were like, okay, whatever, because we had wedding money. And then, the first year, Nathaniel couldn't work, because he's from Montreal, so I didn't think anything. I found myself in a position where I'm lying to my parents that I'm not paying for anything, because my family's very old school.

**Jessica:** [00:03:02] I don't mind like helping, but to help—to pay for a lot of things, and like it definitely puts a strain on us, because my savings are running out and we have two kids now. I do have more inside now, because to all of these things. And so, it's very frustrating to me. And then, my parents asked me like, oh, my gosh, Nathaniel is doing house, he's going at his job, and I kind of have to be like, yeah, like he's doing good, like he's paying for everything, whatever, but it's hard. It's hard.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:03:35] That was hard to follow. When I'm talking to people in financial trouble, they rarely come to me with a logical numbered list of their issues and their proposed solutions. It's more often a long list of problems followed by negative feelings, all interlaced with grievances. Remember this, people with financial problems love to talk about their problems. My job is to see if they're ready to talk about solutions. Nathaniel, by the way, mirrors this communication style.

**Nathaniel:** [00:04:10] I'm a lighting consultant. In the last couple years, there's been millions of people like me that joined the industry thinking they're going to get rich off LED, the new hot thing. So, it took me time to realize that the market in New York was so saturated. I felt, I'm going to move to New York, it's going to be easier with work, it's a bigger city, but it was the opposite. And then, the last year, I decided to explore manufacturing, and the money that I make, I'm investing in this business.

**Nathaniel:** [00:04:49] When I come home, and it's the end of the month, and we need to pay rent, and I get frustrated that her family, they help, but with each help, there's a punch. It's not the best type of help. So, that's really where we fight the most. That's maybe the only reason we fight. So, I get upset at just that I don't understand why, and then I start getting upset at her parents, and then we leave it, and then it becomes a big fight, and we try to make up at the end of the night, but it adds up. We're living month to month. And I didn't think it was going to be like that before we got married. And on top of that, I never worked as hard as I did in the last five years.

**Jessica:** [00:05:37] Could I just add something to that?

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:05:39] Of course.

**Jessica:** [00:05:40] Yeah. I do wish my parents help more 100%, but like I said, like they're very old school. They believe, the husband should be making money, the husband should be providing, and everything. But at this point, I'm not even mad at my parents anymore, because it's like it's been five years already. So, I got my husband, we're supposed to be partners. Another thing we argue about is I grew up in a city, I see myself here, like when I think about the future, I want to go and buy an apartment here, and have my kids grow up here, and Nathaniel keeps telling me, let's move to Florida, and this, and that, like it's cheaper.

**Jessica:** [00:06:17] I'm like, it's not cheaper, like we have two cars, you have this, you have that and that, and to what expense? I won't be happy, like I just know myself. And he tells me like, then would you like to give it a chance? It's just I'm very aware of what I like and what I don't like. I know I grew up in the city, I go down, I get my coffee, I can do things, like I like walking, like I'm just like always out, I'm always doing something. I don't like going at a car and putting my kids in the car. It's like a slap for me.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:06:49] Did you notice all the stories they both tell themselves about their lives? Nathaniel didn't envision marriage like this. In fact, his friends think he married into money. That's a story. Jessica doesn't envision herself ever living in Florida. That's a story. Most of us have a vision of what our life is going to be like. We have a story about what our spouse is going to look like, what job we're going to have, where we're going to live. And I found that it's really, really hard to accept that your life might not turn out the way you envisioned it.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:07:25] After a while, it's not just a dream. It actually becomes part of your identity. And this is one reason you see people making decisions that might seem bewildering to you, like a couple who hangs on to living in a place that they clearly can't afford. Now, to you, the outsider, it's so obvious, just move. But if your entire vision of your life has been to live in a certain city, even a certain neighborhood, it can become really, really hard to accept that that might not be reality for you.

**Nathaniel:** [00:08:01] This is another thing that Jess likes the good life. And I told her, if you want me to provide, we've got to downgrade. I can't afford an apartment like this. And Rome wasn't built overnight. My business is going to—I'm going to make it, but it's going to take a little bit of time. And I did provide for a while in terms of rent. I buy a lot of things, for food, like diapers, whatever, for the essentials. And even rent, I did. For a while, I was paying rent, but I can't keep providing a lifestyle that we can't afford. And that's one thing that bothered me, that she wants to live in New York City, the most expensive city when we can't afford it. So, I told her, you have no choice to help out, your parents have to help out for now.

**Jessica:** [00:08:58] I know what hard work is and I don't mind hard work. Yes, I do have high expectations, because I want him to be the best person he can be. I want to also be the best person I can be, but at the same time, like the basics, food on table, schools for my kids, a roof over our head. Like those things, I don't want to have stress over.

**Nathaniel:** [00:09:18] Yeah. I keep telling her that I didn't move to New York to be a taxi, because sometimes, I was told that, be a taxi if you have to, do whatever it takes, work in a bakery, after work, go to your another job, and do your night job, and do whatever it takes to provide for the family. But I work hard. I know I work hard, but I just don't feel—I have a limit to what I'm going to do. People think in Montreal where I came from, they think I married into big money, and now, I have it good, I'm set up for life, but it's really not like that at all.

**Jessica:** [00:10:00] The point is there's no shame in doing whatever we have to do for your family. That was his point, but like it was taken to the next level.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:10:09] How long ago did that conversation happen, Nathaniel?

**Nathaniel:** [00:10:12] It was a year after we got married.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:10:14] Jessica, he remembers that conversation very vividly. Why did he bring up a conversation very emotionally charged four years later?

**Jessica:** [00:10:26] I think he's just upset with the way my family has comments or they try to say things to help him and it just gets translated in the wrong way. And I think he has a lot of resentment towards my family in the sense of, well, why don't they help us?

**Nathaniel:** [00:10:49] Yeah, they help us, but like I said, every little help, it's a punch here, a punch there, and it's rubbed in my face. You come to our house, we give you the best food, you drink our best wine, we take care of you, we do everything for you.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:11:06] Okay. We're going to get to the family-

**Nathaniel:** [00:11:08] But I want to see my kids. My grandchildren, I would take them with me everywhere. We're going away for the holidays. We're driving to Miami. I would never let my daughter drive to Miami, but when it's fine, I'll do whatever it takes to make sure we go away for the holidays.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:11:29] Nathaniel goes off on rants like this a lot, and he's spinning, he's getting madder and madder, and after a while, he doesn't even remember what the original question was. Now, imagine communicating like this with your partner, but 10 times worse, because you don't have somebody like me there as a third party, and doing it for years, and years, and years. After a while, it's almost impossible to communicate with each other when you're speaking to the ghosts of your relationship.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:12:01] Every one of us knows somebody like this. It might be parents or relatives, people who sit down and just bicker with each other over and over again. You might tell yourself, oh, that's how they express themselves, that's how they show love. I don't believe it. I think if you ever ask any of these people, do you want to keep bickering with each other like this, they will instantly tell you, no, but it's her fault, it's his fault, they'll go right back into it. They don't want to do it, but they don't know how to stop.

**Jessica:** [00:12:37] I just want to like be able to breathe. It's like it's a lot on me. It's a lot of pressure from everyone. I'm lying to my family and like I'm trying to support. Because I have two kids, a husband, I have a dog, I'm doing everything like to stay afloat. Like I just want to be able to commit, like I want just to be able to pay the food, to pay the schools. Sorry.

**Nathaniel:** [00:13:07] Every day I step out of my apartment cost me \$100.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:13:13] Wait. Hold on. Let's finish, because, Jessica—we were going to start with Nathaniel, but I'm hearing you, you have a lot to say, I want to hear it. Jessica, what would be the ideal outcome from this call?

**Jessica:** [00:13:27] To like just find a way to make more money, to be stable, just to pay for basics, and then we can go to like other stuff, vacations, whatever. At this point, I don't care about that right now. Like I'm scared to look at my bank account, because it's like it's diminishing every day. And like I don't think Nathaniel realizes, he thinks like I'm using my parents' money. No, it's my money. I received it. I worked for it. I have a home decor company.

**Jessica:** [00:13:59] I'm doing all of this by myself, and somehow, I feel like he doesn't realize like I buy the meat, I buy the fish, I buy the groceries, I order Costco, the diapers, the wipes, the this, the that. Like I take my daughter out, I go and buy her food, buy them clothes, I pay the rent. Like it's just all on me and I don't think he realizes to what extent I'm really doing, like I'm drained in every aspect, physically and mentally, and I'm tired. It's like I have it inside me that I'm not healthy because of this.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:14:35] It sounds like you've taken on a lot.

**Jessica:** [00:14:38] Yeah. And I never thought, I honestly never thought I was this strong, because like I said, I had a nice upbringing. Like I never thought being in this situation. Like I never thought I would have to hustle this much for kids.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:14:56] Okay. So, if you could have anything from this call, it sounds like you would want Nathaniel to understand the burden that you've taken on and it sounds like you would want to know that at the end of the month, you can pay for the basics, food, rent, your kids.

**Jessica:** [00:15:18] Yeah, like I want him to share this burden with me, it's not all me.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:15:24] Okay. Great. Nathaniel, if you could get anything out of this call, what would it be?

**Nathaniel:** [00:15:32] I don't want you to think that I don't spend any money, because my credit card-

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:15:40] Hold on. Let me stop you right there. I just asked Nathaniel what he wants to get out of this call, and his response was an immediate defense about how he spends money. You both have a tendency to go into your automatic responses. Have you noticed that? Both of you do it. It's a very simple question. What do you want to get out of this call? Suddenly, we're talking about the family history, and this and that, and what coffee I like.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:16:07] You will never get to a solution while you are stuck talking about your problems. People with problems love to talk about their problems. You both love it. Most couples spend four to five minutes giving me background, and then I ask lots of questions. You two spent 22 minutes talking, I hardly spoke at all. And if I hadn't stepped in, you would have spoken for the next three hours. And do you know where you would have gotten? Nowhere.

**Nathaniel:** [00:16:39] I have to defend myself. When I hear things that I don't agree with, I have to defend myself. If I hear something I don't agree with, I always—I have a big mouth when it comes to this.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:16:50] And does that work for you?

**Nathaniel:** [00:16:52] No.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:16:53] No. I want to know where you want to go. So, Nathaniel, tell me, what do you want to get out of this call?

**Nathaniel:** [00:17:00] I would love to get some counseling on my business on how to be independent.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:17:09] Tell me more. What does that mean?

**Nathaniel:** [00:17:11] I want to be able to provide for my family without anyone being there to tell us what to do, and I don't want to count on anyone. I want to be the own boss and provider of my family, not boss, but I want to be a role model and I want to be someone my family can look up to.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:17:32] Very good.

**Nathaniel:** [00:17:33] And proud of.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:17:34] Excellent.

**Nathaniel:** [00:17:35] If you can help me, and give me some pointers, and help me out to align myself properly, so I can have clarity in my business, that would be huge.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:17:48] Your problem is not with your business. Your business has nothing to do with this. So, we're going to talk, but it's not a business problem that's going on here. There's something much bigger here.

**Nathaniel:** [00:18:03] I'm the problem?

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:18:04] No, I'm not saying that. I don't know. We're going to get there. But first of all, I'm not here to point fingers. I'm here to help you both, because I want you to be successful. I don't think that me giving you a few tips on your business is really going to change anything. I can fly to New York tomorrow and work with you directly on a business, that's not really going to make these problems go away.

**Nathaniel:** [00:18:28] I strongly believe that if I'm successful in my business, most of our problems will be solved. It's a constant money issue, it's all about money here.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:18:42] Nathaniel doesn't believe me, and this is really common. When there's a problem in a relationship, it is tempting. It's easy to fixate on the details. If she would stop spending on eating out, we would be just fine, or I told him that we need to spend time with our family for Christmas. Truthfully, that's almost never the real problem. It's just a symptom of the deeper, deeper issue.



**Ramit Sethi:** [00:19:10] Most of us never even see the real problem, much less discuss it, which is why it feels so frustrating to go over the same fight again, and again, and again. Nathaniel thinks he needs business advice. Jessica initially wanted him to contribute 100 bucks a month to their joint finances. Both of them really believe that that's what they need, that it will help them. But you know what, it won't. What about before COVID? How were you both doing financially?

**Nathaniel:** [00:19:44] We got married, so we had a little money to—we had a beautiful, lavish wedding. Sometimes, I think maybe we should have done something smaller, and then we would have put money aside, but we had a beautiful wedding. And it's very—it's just not—I'm sorry. Repeat your question.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:20:08] You mentioned that you used to make 100K if it weren't for COVID, so how were you doing before COVID?

**Nathaniel:** [00:20:14] We still had problems, because New York City is an expensive city.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:20:18] Are you guys seeing that making an extra 50K is not going to change your life? You both came into this call believing if your rent goes down a little bit, all your problems will be solved, or if you make an extra 50K, all your problems will be solved. But you've already done that and you still had the same problems. Are you starting to see that the number on the spreadsheet is not really the problem? Because if you made 250K tomorrow, you would still have the same problems.

**Nathaniel:** [00:20:51] I don't think so. We would have some issues, but I think this is the root of most of the problems. I really do.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:20:58] How come? You used to make double the money, you still had problems, why?

**Nathaniel:** [00:21:01] Because rent, five times 12, already almost at 100,000. And then, that's without a car, then we need a car to travel, the kids, 20,000-dollar for pre-K. At one point, I told Jess, we're not having kids, we can't have kids, how are we going to

provide? And her parents said, don't worry, it's all good, just have belief. Money is ridiculous in New York City. It's out of control.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:21:33] Okay.

**Jessica:** [00:21:34] I don't think it's all because of New York City, but okay.

**Nathaniel:** [00:21:36] Right. For what we're paying rent here, we can have a castle in Montreal.

**Jessica:** [00:21:42] I just think even in the suburbs, such things add up, my aunt lives in the suburbs, and she pays the same amount we're paying here, with two cars, she has this.

**Nathaniel:** [00:21:50] But she has a castle. She has a big house.

**Jessica:** [00:21:52] The garden, the pool.

**Nathaniel:** [00:21:53] Anywhere outside of New York City would be 50% less, easy.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:21:59] Okay. Well, I think they've just proven my point. One of my philosophies is take the win. I'm going to take the win for myself and give myself a big pat on the back. They love having their same pre-prepared arguments. That's not a response to my questions. It's a psychological tick. So, I think I need to change my approach here. I need to help them discover why they keep going back to the same automatic responses. I need for them to really internalize this for themselves. You two seem to like going over your same arguments over and over. What does it get you? That's my question for you.

**Jessica:** [00:22:36] Yeah, over this, like it's pent up, so the second door is open, then it just comes flooding out. It's just a buildup of everyday life. Sometimes, like I just explode. And like I said, I'm not really telling my family about all this, so the second I— there's like a switch, like it's almost like biting. It's like I want to say like all these things that are bothering me. It just makes me feel a bit better to like get it out.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:23:09] It makes you feel better. That's what it gets you.

**Jessica:** [00:23:13] Yeah.

**Nathaniel:** [00:23:13] Bottom line, it gets us absolutely nowhere.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:23:16] I get that. Obviously, it gets you nowhere. I get that. But what does it get you emotionally?

**Nathaniel:** [00:23:22] The anger out of me.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:23:24] Yeah. And where do you redirect that anger?

**Nathaniel:** [00:23:27] To my family.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:23:29] Yeah. See why this is not about business tips? I mean, we still got more to go, but it took us an hour to get to this realization that you don't actually need a business tip, because that's not going to do anything. And you actually don't need 50 grand more a year, because that's not going to do anything. The real problem is the way you two are communicating.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:23:56] And if you can't fix that, you could have somebody write you a one million-dollar check tomorrow, it'll last you a couple of years, and then it will be gone, and all that will be left will be finger pointing. So, we'll talk about some of the numbers here, but ultimately, you have some very tough decisions to make. Those decisions are not going to be found on a spreadsheet. And there's no secret trick, no secret business thing to fix. There's only the two of you. How does that sound to both of you?

**Jessica:** [00:24:27] Good.

**Nathaniel:** [00:24:29] Excellent.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:24:30] Okay. Great. I feel that we're getting some more very positive, and that to me feels really good. Watching the two of you, even your body language has

changed in the last 60 seconds. So, we're starting to, all of us, open our eyes. Let's see what their options actually are. I think it's time to talk numbers.

**Nathaniel:** [00:24:53] How much do I need to make to live in New York without problems? 200,000 a year.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:24:59] Okay. Let me just make sure I have these numbers correct. Understanding that it's been an unusual year, but ballpark, making about 60 to 70K a year, the breakdown of that seems to be approximately 20K coming in from Jessica, 50K coming in from Nathaniel. Jessica, you have about \$10,000 of savings, which you mentioned is dwindling, and your rent is approximately \$2,000 a month. Is that fairly accurate?

**Jessica:** [00:25:33] Yeah.

**Nathaniel:** [00:25:35] No, the rent is a big problem. The rent is a big problem. Like I said, I paid the rent, partial rent for many years, and I told Jessica, look, I'm not going to get myself into debt. When you want to live in this city, it's super expensive. I'm new, I had perfect credit in Canada.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:25:55] Okay. Hearing these numbers, how do you think you are doing financially?

**Jessica:** [00:26:04] Not good at all.

**Nathaniel:** [00:26:06] Our rent shouldn't be more than 30% of our salary.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:26:10] Okay. How do you feel you're doing, Nathaniel, hearing these numbers?

**Nathaniel:** [00:26:16] Not where I want to be at all. Okay.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:26:19] Okay. So, both of you are aligned there, even if it's that you're both not doing well, at least you're on the same page there. That is great. Hey, listen, sometimes, I talk to people, and one of them says, we're doing great, the other one

says, we're about to go bankrupt. That's a real problem, because they're not even on the same page. At least you're both aligned. Now, I agree with you that from looking just at these numbers, what am I going to say about that?

**Nathaniel:** [00:26:49] Rent is too high.

**Jessica:** [00:26:51] Yeah, rent is too high

**Nathaniel:** [00:26:52] Rent is floundering us.

**Jessica:** [00:26:54] We live in a two-bedroom apartment. Yes, the rent is "expensive" for us, but apartment is expensive. My family is in real estate, so I see value in things like, okay, its location, my daughter's school is just two blocks from here, my family is just two blocks from here. There's like a temple right near us.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:27:19] Sometimes, there are some simple financial truths. For Jessica and Nathaniel, the truth is they can't afford to keep living here. But as I share this with them, notice their reaction. Try to imagine that I barged into this conversation and told them the same thing in the first three minutes of talking to them. How do you think they would have reacted? Here, I spent a lot of time digging into the underlying issues, asking tons of questions before going into the numbers, and this is the opposite of our instinct, especially if we know the truth, especially if we're good at numbers. We overvalue math and we undervalue psychology. Here. Listen to their reactions.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:28:10] I'm going to be very candid about these numbers, and then we're going to talk about what options you have going forward. You don't make enough to live where you live. So, that's just the bottom line. One of the problems with living above your means is that you spend so much time underwater just trying to stay alive, trying to pay this bill first and that bill that you can never actually look forward. When was the last time the two of you talked about, what do we want to do five years from now? What kind of beautiful vacation do we want to take? Jessica, when was the last time you talked about that?

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:28:55] Never.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:28:58] Exactly. How could you? Because you're so busy trying to stay afloat that you never get the chance to look ahead. And you're both so young, your kids are so young, but you have chosen a life where you have sentenced yourself to struggling, and so to get out of this situation is going to be a little difficult.

**Jessica:** [00:29:28] Look, I don't want to go back to the whole money thing, but right now, like I'm currently paying for all of this, but we can both afford it if Nathaniel helps me with some of the things we need to pay for. That's how I see it.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:29:45] Okay. If Nathaniel helped you, how much would that be?

**Jessica:** [00:29:53] I would ask them to help me with half of the things that I'm doing right now, like half of rent, half of food, or for a school, or whatever, it's just I think we can meet in middle. Like I don't mind contributing, it's just I'll often like do other things.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:30:11] Nathaniel could write his entire paycheck to your household and you would not have enough to get by. That's the truth. That's a simple truth. There's certainly a discussion to be had about how you both contribute and what proportion, but Nathaniel could write 100% of what he earns into the household and you would not have enough to survive.

**Jessica:** [00:30:35] This scares me a little bit. I don't know. It's a lot to take in. I just don't see myself living in anywhere else in the city. I just like-

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:30:51] Let's pause. Notice what your mind will do. Your mind will start spinning on all the things you don't want, because change is hard, so you have options. I'm going to start with you, Jessica. You tell me two of your options. You don't have to go with any of these. We're just going to put everything on the table. No matter how crazy, how unlikable these options are, how cool these options are, we're just going to put them on the table, no judgement. Let's start with you, Jessica. Give me two options for what you could do.

**Jessica:** [00:31:30] Two options of what I can do is lower my standards, not expect to live on the Upper East Side, to put my daughter in school in the Upper East Side, so my option would be to lower my standards and move somewhere more reasonable.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:31:53] Is there anything else?

**Nathaniel:** [00:31:55] Move.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:31:57] But you already said that.

**Nathaniel:** [00:32:00] Be patient. I keep telling Jessica, be a little more patient, we're almost there.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:32:06] Well, you guys are close to losing—you don't have any money. Even if you had—you can't even make it one year on what you-

**Nathaniel:** [00:32:14] I have one option is to sell my gold watch.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:32:19] There you go. That's an option. I don't think that's the right option, but that's an option. Very good. What else?

**Nathaniel:** [00:32:27] Maybe you should consider finding a job, a better job.

**Jessica:** [00:32:32] I like what I'm doing, so I'm not going to change. I put a lot of money in production right now for my sliders, so I'm definitely not backing out right now, but it's hard to give up, and say, no, let's work on this together. Like I think we both just want to be right.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:32:53] Wow. Now, we're starting to get somewhere we both want to be right, and so when I start going into my automatic answer, rehashing the thing that I've told 25 times about, I'm not moving, and we could live in a castle, what do I feel? I feel right. One was to find a way of lowering the rent, whatever that means, and the second way is to increase your household income, however that might happen.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:33:29] I would say that the option of just continuing doing what you're doing is not an option. Do you know why? How long can you last in the current state that you're in? No, like a matter of months. And now, I'm not telling you you have to move out tomorrow. That's not my job. That's your joint job to decide what to do. But I

am telling you that no amount of saving \$100 here or \$300 there will allow you to afford this rent.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:34:03] Okay. And you cannot move forward in your life, you both are so young, your kids are at such a beautiful young age, it will be very hard for you to look forward in life, to think about camp for your kids, vacation, any of that, if you are intentionally putting yourself in a position where you can't even get above water every month. Okay. So, those are the two main levers in your life.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:34:32] Earn more, and I believe you both can, but you're going to have to probably do things differently than you've been doing. You might decide in a couple of years, you know what, it's really important for us to move back to Manhattan. Let's calculate the numbers, we're a little bit more confident now, you're not closing the door on any part of life, you're so young, but you have to be willing to make a change in order to be able to live sustainably.

**Jessica:** [00:35:00] I think so 100%, but it's a lot to digest. I would love to make more money. I can't argue with anything you're saying.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:35:08] I think I would look at it not as lowering my standards. I would change the entire narrative.

**Nathaniel:** [00:35:16] A new chapter, a positive chapter, a new start, optimistic start.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:35:23] Wow. That sounds a lot better to me than lowering your standards.

**Nathaniel:** [00:35:28] I'm excited. I'm really excited.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:35:33] Let me remind you, this isn't the end of living in Manhattan forever. It's not the case at all. But in order to be able to live there worry-free and to live the kind of lifestyle you want, you're going to need to give yourself the space to earn more. Jessica and Nathaniel are talking about a huge life change, moving your family to a completely new place, that's a lot to process. And especially for Jessica, it's a complete and sudden change from the life that she envisioned. So, what I want to do is I



want to pause here, I want to check in, I want to make sure she's taking this okay. In your own money conversations, use this technique, pause, lots of check-ins, and remember, go slow in order to go fast.

**Jessica:** [00:36:32] I'm afraid of change, and I'm so close to my mom, like I see her almost every day, and like I walk over my siblings, it's just—I've never lived far from them, like I've never lived like more than a few blocks away from them. So, it's definitely hard to hear.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:36:52] Nathaniel, pick up this conversation. You must have questions for Jessica on how she's feeling right now. Ask her, turn around, look at her, and ask.

**Nathaniel:** [00:37:06] How are you feeling, honey? I know it's hard. We can work it out together. We can give it a chance. We could make things work out. We have two beautiful kids.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:37:18] Ask her. Don't tell her. Ask her more. Don't tell her. What do you want to know?

**Nathaniel:** [00:37:26] Your mom's always going to be here. She could come see you all the time.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:37:30] Nathaniel, look at her face. She doesn't want to hear you telling her. You lapse into telling. I want you to stay with asking her. She just told us five very important things.

**Nathaniel:** [00:37:43] If we're not happy, we'll always come back. We could always come back.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:37:47] Stop. Why are you telling her? I just told you we are not in the telling mode. She just told you a bombshell. Let her talk. What do you want to ask her? I'm afraid we'll never be able to come back. Ask her a question.

**Nathaniel:** [00:38:11] Why do you think that?

**Jessica:** [00:38:13] Because I think that you'll be happy in the suburbs, the kids will be happier somewhere else. And then, you're going to tell me yourself that you want to move back?

**Nathaniel:** [00:38:22] But if your kids are happy-

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:38:25] But is a very good way to get your partner defensive, you're doing a great job, Nathaniel. Why do you feel that? She told you something else. Keep going. Play it out.

**Jessica:** [00:38:37] Like to me, this is my home. I feel at home here.

**Nathaniel:** [00:38:41] I understand. You're right. I don't know. I know this is good. I just need a little more training wheels.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:38:54] Great. Thank you for asking. I love that you asked. That's what I'm here for. That's what I'm here for. I'm so glad you asked. The two of you, you're so close to having these beautiful conversations, you just don't yet have the tools, which is okay. The tools are easy. It's the intent that's not easy, and you both have it.

**Jessica:** [00:39:17] I do find that's why we have the majority of our fights, because he tells me, well, my way's the right way, and then automatically, I go into defensive mode, so I definitely need him to articulate his words better and actually listen into what I'm saying.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:39:36] Yeah.

**Jessica:** [00:39:37] Yeah, I'm willing to work things out, and I'm definitely going to try to be more patient, instead of jumping to conclusions or just getting defensive?

**Nathaniel:** [00:39:52] I'm not good with words.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:39:54] It's okay. You're fluent in English, you're very good with words. You may need to build the skills of communicating more effectively, but I totally trust

you. You've done that on this call. I've watched you do it in front of my eyes. So, yeah, you're both going to need a little patience for each other.

**Nathaniel:** [00:40:13] I learned more about Jessica now. There are things that I discovered that could only help. I didn't realize what Jessica would tell me, I'm scared to go and never come back. In my mind, I'm like, yeah, but don't worry, we're going to get there, you're going to love it, and then who cares? And if you're not happy, don't worry. But that's not the way to do things. Okay, honey, if you're not happy, we'll figure a way to come back. That's fine. That could go a long way.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:40:50] Yes, what a beautiful thing to say, that you've been married five years, and just in this conversation, you've learned something new about your wife. I find that to be absolutely beautiful.

**Jessica:** [00:41:05] Thank you.

**Nathaniel:** [00:41:07] Thank you. And diplomacy goes a long way, and it's something that I lack and I need polishing in.

**Ramit Sethi:** [00:41:15] If you've been enjoying these podcasts, I want to invite you to check out my book, *I Will Teach You To Be Rich*, which is in every bookstore and library you can possibly imagine. I also want to invite you to join my newsletter at [iwt.com](http://iwt.com). And I send out all kinds of material on money, business, careers, and psychology, especially things that I never share with the public. Thanks for listening. Here's what you'll find next week on the *I Will Teach You To Be Rich* podcast.

**Maria:** [00:41:47] My ideal scenario is where we can dictate what generosity looks like towards both of our parents or siblings and any other people or charities in our life. I think that's, for me, the biggest thing I value, is just financial freedom. And that doesn't mean that it doesn't come with generosity or caring for family, that's a value that we both deeply share, it's just having the optionality and not having the generosity come from expectation.