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Dear Money Talk Reader,

Money Talk: A Financial Guide For Women was developed because women have unique financial needs. Statistics tell us that it is only a matter of time before most (85–90%) women will be on their own financially. Some will never marry, some will see their marriages end in divorce, and some will outlive their husbands.

Women have unique financial needs for the following reasons.

- We live longer, on average, than men, so our money has to last longer.
- We earn less, on average, than men do.
- We may have gaps in our employment history, due to family care giving, that will affect future retirement benefits.
- Some women rely on a spouse for income and are at risk for becoming a “displaced homemaker” if the relationship ends (e.g., in death and divorce).
- Some women lack financial experience because “the man is supposed to handle the money.”

This guidebook will provide you with information that you need to take charge of your financial future. Each of the five class sessions includes a number of investment lessons. They will also introduce you to important financial terms such as “net worth” and “expense ratio.”

Each class session also features a number of exercises. They were included so that you could “personalize” the information. In other words, instead of just reading about how to calculate your net worth, you have a form to calculate your own (Session I). In Session III, there are forms to compare different types of investments and calculate your investment risk tolerance.

Simply reading *Money Talk: A Financial Guide For Women* will not change your financial situation. You need to take action (e.g., starting an individual retirement account [IRA]) to achieve your financial goals. That’s why the exercises are included. You’ll find a list of Minimum “Need to Knows” at the end of each session. These are the most important facts covered in each lesson.

Your local Cooperative Extension office is a resource that can help you improve your financial well-being through classes, speaking engagements, publications, financial consultations, Web sites, newspaper articles, and other outreach methods. Feel free to get in touch if we can be of assistance.

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