



Dave Says

Teach them, don't enable them

Dear Dave,
My younger brother and his wife did their taxes last month and learned they owe \$15,000 to the IRS. I love them both, but they are extremely irresponsible with money. I know they have a lot of credit card debt, too. I am debt-free, including my home after following your plan, and would like to help them. I was thinking about taking out a one-time loan from the bank to help cover what they owe the IRS, because my emergency fund is a little low after a recent car accident. Under the circumstances, would this be okay?

Carson

Dear Carson,
In my mind, "help" would be aiding them in changing their ways with money. I don't say this to be sarcastic or mean, but it's the truth about where they are in life right now. They both need to be educated, not enabled, when it comes to their behavior with money. This doesn't mean they're bad people, but it does mean you don't need to be a party to, or a temporary fix for, their bad financial decisions.

Some people might say taking this attitude would mean you don't love and care about your brother and his wife. Those people would be wrong. You've already told me they won't behave with money, so at this point it would kind of be like giving a drunk a drink. You don't give more money to people who won't behave with it. That solves nothing, and in most cases it just reinforces the negative behavior.

This might be a good opportunity to sit down with your brother and his wife, and have a firm—but gentle—talk about their situation. Maybe you could offer to teach them the things that worked for you when it comes to finances, using the Baby Steps as your guide. And make sure they get in touch with the IRS about a payment plan.

I know you love them, but you can't fix this for them. In some cases, the best thing you can give someone is the understanding that they need to change their behavior. Hopefully, with you as their inspiration and support, they can learn how to manage their finances wisely.

Good luck, and God bless you all, Carson!

— Dave

* Dave Ramsey is a seven-time #1 national best-selling author, personal finance expert, and host of The Ramsey Show, heard by more than 18 million listeners each week. He has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, Today Show, Fox News, CNN, Fox Business, and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people regain control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions.

Americanisms



“Death, taxes and childbirth!
There's never any convenient
time for any of them.”

— Margaret Mitchel

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