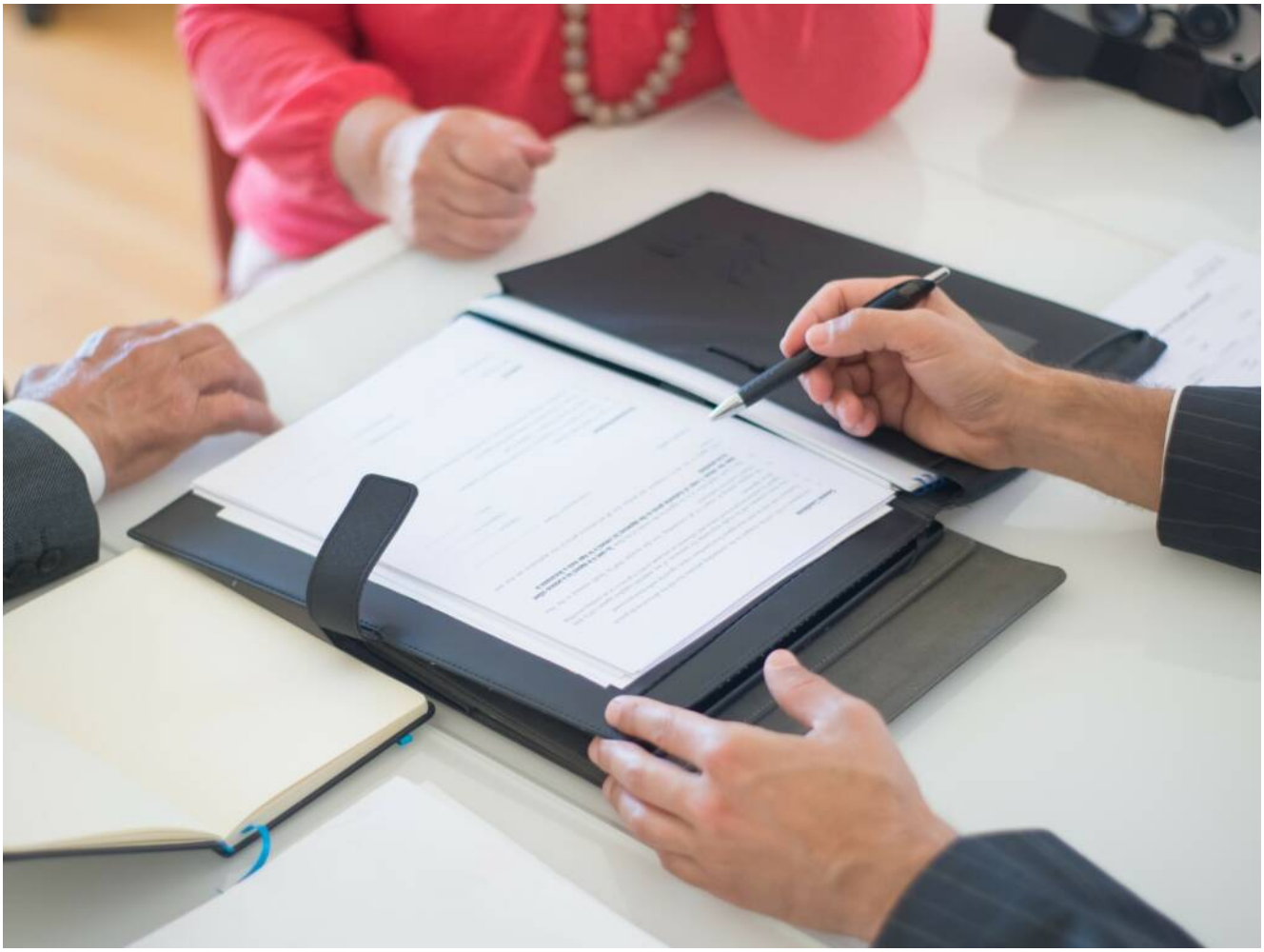
Ensure Your Life Wishes Are Granted Through Effective Estate Planning



Legacy planning is often the last piece folks tackle in their financial planning because it’s the least appealing to think about.

Planning for a robust nest egg that will keep you safe, secure, and fulfilled when you stop working? Fun!

Deciding what to do with your assets when you’re no longer around to enjoy them? Not so much.

But if you put off your legacy planning too long, you run a real risk of leaving behind nothing but headaches for your loved ones. It feels like the least important item on your to-

do list until it becomes the most important and you can’t do anything about it.

Here’s a quick checklist that will help you and your spouse outline a legacy plan that will protect your assets, care for each other in the event of incapacitation, and give you both some peace of mind.

1. Create a balance sheet.

Maybe the best way to ease into this process is to set aside emotion for a moment and get the raw numbers on paper.

Start by adding up all your assets, including:

- Real estate
- Personal valuables (vehicles, jewelry, etc.)
- Bank accounts
- Investment accounts
- Retirement plans (401(k), IRA, pension, etc.)
- Business interests (ownership, equipment, etc.)
- Benefits payable upon death (life insurance, Social Security, etc.)

From this total, subtract your liabilities, such as:

- Credit card debt
- Mortgage
- Vehicle loans
- Personal loans

This simple balance sheet should give you a rough idea of your net worth. It will also give you a list of items you’ll want to consider passing down to heirs, and a list of debts you might want to work on paying down.

2. Determine what plans you have and what plans you need.

At the bare minimum, everyone should have:

- **Last Will and Testament**, which details how you want your assets distributed to heirs and charitable organizations.
- **Power of Attorney**, which authorizes someone of your choosing to act on your behalf if you're incapacitated.
- **Health Care Directive**, which details what kind of care you want should you become incapacitated.
- **Living Will**, which authorizes someone to make medical decisions for you if you can't, based upon what's stipulated in your health care directive.

Any of these documents that you don't have, you should get working on.

If you have any older versions of these documents that you haven't looked at in a few years, you should review them to make sure they're up to date.

3. Discuss your legacy wishes with your spouse.

Now comes the tough part – filling in all the blanks.

Like every other part of your retirement planning, clear and open communication with your spouse is key. If you're having trouble opening this line of dialogue, here are some questions to get you started:

- *Do we have all our important documents (personal ID, bank accounts, legacy documents, etc.) organized in one place?*
- *Who should execute our will?*
- *Who are our key beneficiaries? What do we want to leave them?*
- *What charities or causes would we like to support with our legacy?*
- *What are our medical wishes in the event one or both of us become incapacitated?*
- *If one of us passes, where will the surviving spouse live?*

4. Meet with professionals.

Again, we understand that these are difficult questions to tackle. Many folks prefer to tell themselves, *“I won’t be around, I don’t care, the good kid will take care of it.”*

Unfortunately, your state of residence doesn’t consider this a legal estate plan. If you don’t have all your essential documents in order when you pass, the state will settle your estate according to local law. In even the closest families, this process can get really messy once the courts start deciding where your assets will end up.

We believe that part of living the best life possible with the money you have is putting a plan in place that will extend your legacy for years to come, while also making a difficult time a little bit easier on your loved ones. The best way to achieve this goal is to work through these hard questions and then bring a “rough draft” of your legacy plan to us.

If you’re not sure where to start, we have a process for thinking through and asking these hard questions with you. We can help finalize any lingering details, facilitate any challenging discussions, and connect you with legal professionals who will make sure your legacy is executed the right way when the time comes.

This article was prepared for Aaron Larson’s use.

How a Couple Can Plan

Strategically When Retiring at Different Times



Married couples don’t always plot retirement at the same point in their path. According to a recent study by Fidelity, 43% of couples disagree about what age they plan on retiring. For other folks, circumstances like an unexpected job loss or health issue push spouses onto separate retirement schedules.

When one spouse retires and the other keeps working, it’s important that the couple understands the effects on their finances, their schedules, and their long-term goals. Here are three important conversations that couples should have about syncing two retirements to a shared financial plan.

1. Discuss your reasons and goals.

If you and your spouse could both comfortably retire together, it’s important to ask each other, Why? And why not? What are

the core money and life issues that put you on different retirement timelines?

Does one of you love your job and the other can’t wait to stop working?

Is one of you worried about running out of money in retirement?

Are you picturing a blank weekly schedule you don’t know how to fill?

Are you worried you’re going to drive each other crazy?

Retiring – or not retiring – isn’t necessarily going to solve any of these issues. Talk to each other about the things you want to accomplish separately and together in the next part of your lives. Take out a blank calendar and plot out what your Ideal Week without work might look like. And if you’re not on the same page about your progress toward financial goals, schedule an appointment with your financial advisor. Hopefully, these conversations will give both of you some clarity about the best time for each of you to retire.

2. Discuss schedules and responsibilities.

Even if the working spouse chooses to keep working, seeing their retired spouse lounging around and playing an extra round of golf could breed resentment. Have a conversation about who handles what at home. The retired spouse might take up a few extra responsibilities, like grocery shopping and cooking meals. If the retiree is handy, he or she might make repairs and remodeling projects part of their new retirement routine. And scheduling a weekly lunch date with your working spouse could be a nice break for both of you.

But the new retiree also shouldn’t feel guilty about enjoying retirement. If money isn’t an issue and the working spouse regrets missing out on weekday tennis and sprucing up the

spare bedroom, maybe it’s time to make retirement a shared life transition.

3. Review your financial plan.

Retiring separately can create some complications when it comes to health care. If the retiring spouse is leaving their employer-subsidized plan before age 65, he or she won’t be eligible for Medicare. That means the retiree will have to jump on a plan offered by their spouse’s employer or purchase health care on their state’s marketplace.

Health care is just one line item on your household budget that might go up as your monthly income goes down. Are you and your spouse prepared to tighten the family belt? Or are you going to spend more on recreational activities now that one of you isn’t working? Are you considering other sources of income, such as taking Social Security before full retirement age, making early withdrawals from your retirement accounts, or working part-time?

Much like deciding when to retire, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. What’s most important is coordinating every part of your Personal Pathway so that both you and your spouse get the best life possible from your money in retirement.

This might be a good time to revisit some of our retirement planning tools. Let’s set up an appointment so both you and your spouse can work through these tools and find a plan that will get you both excited about retirement.

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