Starting the Conversation

A Family Discussion Guide for Your Estate and Legacy Plans

One of the greatest gifts you can leave your family isn't simply an estate plan. It's helping them understand the values and intentions behind it.

Every family is different. Some families openly discuss financial matters. Others rarely talk about them. There is no single "right" approach.

The goal isn't to reveal every financial detail. The goal is to leave fewer questions...and greater understanding.

Here are a few ideas that may help you begin.

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1. Choose the Right Time

Don't wait until there's a health crisis or an emergency.

A relaxed family dinner, holiday weekend, or other quiet gathering often creates a much better setting than a stressful situation.

2. Explain Your Values Before Your Assets

Rather than beginning with dollars and percentages, begin with what matters most to you.

You might say:

- "Our greatest priority has always been making sure Mom and I remain financially independent."
- "We've been fortunate in life, and we'd like our wealth to create opportunities rather than dependence."
- "We hope what we've accumulated reflects the values we've tried to live by."

When your family understands your values, your decisions often make much more sense.

3. Don't Feel You Must Share Every Detail

Some parents are comfortable discussing the specifics of their estate plan.

Others prefer not to.

Both approaches can be appropriate.

The important thing is that your family understands your intentions, even if they don't know every number.

4. Explain Decisions That May Raise Questions

If one child received financial assistance years ago...

If someone has special needs...

If you've included charitable gifts...

Or if your estate won't be divided equally...

consider explaining why.

A thoughtful explanation today may prevent misunderstandings tomorrow.

5. Invite Questions

Your goal isn't to deliver a speech.

It's to begin a conversation.

Encourage family members to ask questions and share their thoughts.

You don't need to resolve every issue in one meeting.

Sometimes the first conversation simply opens the door for future discussions.

6. Remember What Legacy Really Means

An estate plan determines **who** receives your wealth.

A legacy plan determines **what you want your wealth to accomplish** during your lifetime—and for the people and causes that matter most after you're gone.

Whether your beneficiaries are children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, friends, or charitable organizations, the greatest legacy isn't measured only by what you leave.

It's measured by the lives you touch and the values you pass on.

A Final Thought

These conversations aren't always easy. But they are among the most meaningful conversations many families will ever have. Your loved ones may not remember every financial detail. They will remember that you cared enough to explain your wishes, your values, and the reasons behind your decisions. That understanding may become one of the greatest gifts you ever leave them.

Retirement isn't simply about preserving wealth. It's about preparing the people your wealth will one day serve.

Disclosures