

Why the Holidays Are Perfect for Talking to Your Family About Your Estate

While it may seem a bit serious, the holidays are perfect for talking to your family about your estate. During the holidays, there is great deal of emphasis on family. You can see it in the idyllic advertising pictures of family gathered around the dinner table with everyone smiling at one another.

This Norman Rockwell view of reality may be a bit of a stretch. But for older family members, the holidays can bring to mind the inevitability of passing on valuables and values. The time seems ripe for considering what will eventually be passed on and to whom.

Tools to Help You Start the Conversation

As part of this thought process, estate owners are often challenged by how to start a conversation with those affected. Recently, a few tools have been developed to help. Many charities and financial and philanthropic advisors offer family meetings for this purpose. [Ethical wills](#), the [Obit Kit](#), and the [Family Love Letter](#) are frameworks that can help you organize your thoughts around this subject. Some parishes offer similar assistance as part of their end-of-life decisions planning. What all these resources have in common is a sharing among those affected.

Values Over Valuables: Prioritizing Personal History

This type of transparency can vary a great deal. Some estate owners are quite comfortable sharing specifics regarding their assets and many are not. Sometimes the heirs are resistant as well, as the subject is one they would rather avoid. More important than telling your heirs the balance in your bank account, however, maybe the personal history, most meaningful experiences and hopes for the future that you would like to be sure they know about and understand. A lack of transparency in this area [may result in adverse consequences to the heirs](#), however.

Being Intentional: The First Steps to Sharing Your Estate Plan

One idea that has worked well for many is to be intentional with the next generation by starting to share with them the thinking behind the current estate plan. Letting them know [where important documents are stored](#) is an easy first step. It can be a natural transition from this conversation into what the documents contain, and what the plans are for those related assets. The why behind the estate owner's decision regarding those assets relates to the values expressed through this disposition. For example, are the heirs to be stewards of this wealth or are they to be possessors of it, or some combination of the two? Contained with this process is the opportunity to share important wishes. Once specifics of the estate plan are shared, the ideal situation is to get buy in and participation from those heirs.



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