



How to talk to your kids about your estate plan

A guide to important conversations on your family's future



When it comes to the future, there are many variables that are out of our control. Estate planning is one way you can remove some of that uncertainty. An estate plan can help lay the groundwork for your wishes (for your property and your health care) to be fulfilled, your wealth to be preserved, and your assets to be transitioned smoothly to your beneficiaries. When an estate plan is done right, it can give you a sense of peace knowing you and your family are well prepared for the future. While many people may recognize the importance of drafting a will as part of their estate plan, most don't realize that communicating the details and your intentions can be just as important. While your will functions as a statement of your ultimate wishes, it won't necessarily provide your family with all of the reasoning behind your decisions.

Talking to your family about your estate plan can be a sensitive topic, one many families tend to avoid. However by putting off this conversation, you risk leaving the outcome to chance. Imagine a situation where an unexpected tragedy were to strike and you haven't discussed your estate plan with your family.

With grief and strong emotions involved, the lack of a clear estate plan can create stress and disrupt family harmony. It can also erode the value of your estate by increasing the cost and time to administer an estate, meaning less wealth for your loved ones. Having discussions about your estate plan may help your family develop a shared common understanding of the future.



Take action

Watch: [How to have "the other talk"](#)

Use: [Estate planning checklist](#)

Learn: [Estate planning hub](#)

Six critical topics in estate planning discussions

There are several important components of an estate plan. If you already have an updated will, you're off to a good start, but a comprehensive estate plan also means making Powers of Attorney, selecting an executor and more. It's important to make sure everyone has a clear understanding of your plan so that your wishes can be fulfilled. Here are some topics to discuss with your loved ones:

1 These are my intentions for my estate and what's important to me...

- Outline your priorities in the next stages of your life (e.g., the well-being of children or grandchildren, your future care needs, your legacy toward family or charity) and explain why they are important to you.
- If you have a will, consider sharing the details and make sure your family knows where to find a copy. If you don't have one, consider having one drafted. Your will should be reviewed when major life events occur so that it continues to reflect your wishes.
- Share whom you have selected to perform important roles, such as executor of your estate; make sure your chosen individuals have provided consent. Discuss the scope of their responsibilities.

2 My advanced care and medical plans include the following...

- Consider making a Power of Attorney for your personal care and let your family know who you have appointed as your Attorney.
- Detail your wishes for long-term care. Tell your family your medical wishes if you were not able to speak or act for yourself due to illness or injury, (e.g., life-sustaining procedures, CPR, mechanical ventilation, end of life care).
- Consider establishing a living will/personal directive and sharing these details with your family.

3 Here's how I'd like my financial responsibilities carried out...

- Consider making a Power of Attorney for your property and finances. Make sure the Attorney you select is aware of the level of responsibility involved.
- Your closest family should be aware of whom you appointed in your Power of Attorney; explain to them why you chose the individual(s) to carry out this role.

4 This is how I envision my celebration of life...

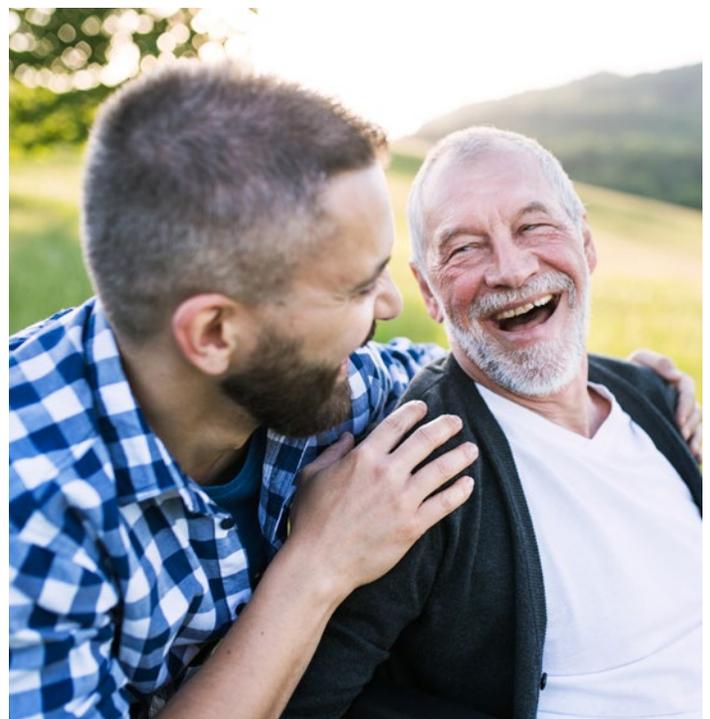
- Prepare and communicate your instructions for funeral arrangements and other ways to honour your memory.
- Outline your preferences, such as burial or cremation, and the location, format and invitees for your memorial service.
- If you have a plan to cover funeral expenses, be sure to share those details with your family.

5 This is how I've considered the family's wishes...

- Your estate plan should primarily ensure your best interests are taken care of; however, it can be valuable to open up the discussion to your loved ones to help avoid family conflict.
- Find out how your closest family members feel about your estate plan to see if they bring up any important issues you might have overlooked.

6 This is what you'll need...

- Your closest family should know where to locate your key documents (wills, Powers of Attorney, bank accounts, passwords, etc.) in a safe yet accessible place.
- Does your spouse/partner know how to access your online accounts, or any other important digital assets (e.g., email, social media and other online accounts, digital currency)?
- Tell your loved ones where they can find the contact information of your executor, individuals with Powers of Attorney, estate planning specialists, lawyer(s) and advisor(s) who helped you draft your estate plan and any financial or investment plans.



Starting the conversation

Talking about your estate plan with a family member is a delicate topic. Selecting the right time, place and people for this conversation is critical. The opportunity to broach the subject may come up more times than you think. Special events, holidays, family gatherings and family trips are usually calming times when people are more emotionally available. Here are some ideas to start the conversation:

Sharing stories about friends and family

"I was thinking about what happened to (a family member or friend) . I want to plan ahead, so I don't become a financial burden to you or anyone else. Let's talk about how we can prevent this from happening to us."

Talking about retirement life

"I've been thinking about my retirement, and I want to be able to do _____. I want to share my plans in case they impact you."

Discussing a treasured family asset

"I've always loved our (family property or heirloom) and have been thinking a lot about it lately. I wanted to share some ideas on my plans for it down the road."

Thinking about the future of family members

"I want to help (a younger family member) with their education savings and/or leave something for charity. I have some ideas on how to do that, but I would like to discuss them with you."



Tips

- **Communicate early.** Don't wait until there's a crisis. Talk to your kids about your estate plan while you're still healthy, not when emotions and stress levels are high due to an unexpected event. Practice being transparent with your kids to avoid any future disputes.
- **Stay organized.** Keep notes from each conversation. Maintaining an [estate planning checklist](#) can be useful to make sure key items are not missed.
- **Practice often.** Every attempt at the conversation is valuable. Considering writing a letter or practicing the conversation with a friend. Have a series of conversations over time, to share more information or any updates. Remember that you can always change your mind as circumstances change and update your estate plan accordingly.

Estate planning involves more than simply preparing for the inevitable. It can also serve as a personal roadmap of your plans and intentions for your next stages in life, one you can share with those closest to you so that your wishes are clearly documented and communicated. A comprehensive estate plan may seem overwhelming, but it's important to have so that you and your family are well prepared for the future.

We're here to help. Your advisor can help bring together a team of experts to help you get started. Let's connect to discuss your needs and how we can help you build a plan for your wishes and legacy.

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