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July

2019

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Parent Sanity Kit

It is hard to believe that August is almost here and soon the kids will be headed back to school. For those of you with teens going off to college, this might be the first time that your “baby” (or grandbaby) actually leaves the nest for a significant period of time. While you have likely taken time to prepare for this milestone-- purchasing dorm room gear, first aid supplies, getting financial aid in order, etc. there is likely one critical preparation step that you missed. (Continued on Page 4)

Estate Planning Can Bring Up Difficult Questions and Conversations

Meeting with an estate planning lawyer can be hard for many reasons, not the least of which is that very few of us even want to consider our own

mortality. In cases where an adult child is working with a parent and his or her estate planning lawyer, a whole different set of difficult emotions arise. And, there is always the discomfort that comes from acknowledging the fact that either you or your spouse will likely outlive the other, not to mention the idea of possibly leaving minor children behind.

Fortunately, estate planning lawyers have a lot of experience in working through these emotions with their clients. That is not to say that things never get uncomfortable, but it is nice to



have a seasoned professional there, not only to mitigate discomfort, but also to force us to ask some of the questions that we do not necessarily want to face.

Minor Children

Those with minor children have to prepare for situations where either one or both parents pass away. Most of the time, property will automatically be inherited by a surviving spouse, but what happens when there is not one? Minors cannot inherit property directly, which means there needs to be a plan in place for what would happen. Additionally, there is a difficult-to-face question regarding guardianship of those children. Who will receive custody? And will that person also have control over the children's finances, or will you name a separate person or institution to oversee the money?

Inheritance for Spouses

As mentioned, when one spouse passes away, his or her property...

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Facts About Wine

Most people enjoy a glass of wine now and again, but very few are aware of the many fascinating trivia facts that abound about the subject. There are around 2000 completely unique wine grapes, but that number will actually increase to around 5000 identified wine grapes eventually, according to scientists. Of the 2000 so far identified, it would take the average person nearly 40 years to actually try each and every one. More than 50 percent of all the wine drunk in the United States comes from just three producers, Constellation Brands, Gallo and The Wine Group. 17 percent of US sales are made by E&J Gallo alone, and there are over 10,000 wineries in the country at present. In the 1990s DNA analyses of the different varieties of wine came up with some surprises, such as the fact that pinot noir, pinot



gris/grigio and pinot blanc are all actually the same grape, with mutations just having changed the color.



Adding Fun to Family Mealtimes

The family meal is a great way for family members to catch up with each other, and the way for everyone to get the most out of the experience is for it to be as relaxed as possible, including lots of chat, laughter and healthy eating.

One good tip to have a fun family meal is to take away all distractions. Put away smartphones and tablets and turn off the television so that everyone's attention is on one another.

Passing on traditions is important in families, and teaching kids family recipes that have been passed down from generation to generation is a great way to reinforce those bonds.

Make sure that the table is full of good healthy food, but also be sure to allow children to make their own choices from the available selection and how much they actually want to eat. Letting kids help set up the meal is also a good way to get them involved and excited about the occasion.



Estate Planning in Brings Up Difficult Questions and Feelings

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...will generally be inherited by the other. But, there are probably plenty of assets you would like to go to other people. Your estate planning lawyer will help you to lay this out legally through the use of a will or trust. This means that the attorney will have to know about those who are important to you, which is not always the most comfortable conversation to have.

Unexpected Heirs

Your estate planning lawyer would not be doing his or her job correctly without having you consider whether or not there are other people in your life who might step forward to claim your property. For example, children from a previous relationship could fall under this category. In fact, a previous spouse could even have a claim to various assets, depending on various factors. For that reason, you will want to check that all policies and accounts (life insurance, retirement, etc.) have been updated to remove your ex as your beneficiary. Even if he or she did not end up getting the money or other property, there is no sense in putting your current spouse through a legal battle that will take time, money, and emotion to fight.

Older Parents

If you are going through the estate planning process with your own parents, some emotions are likely to come to the surface. You may learn about aspects of your parents' past that you would prefer had been kept in the dark. You may also find that something you felt should be yours is destined for a sibling or other party. Again, the estate planning lawyer will have experience in how to handle these situations, so let him or her guide you when necessary.



About Attorney Paul Bernstein

Attorney Bernstein started the Bernstein Law Group, PC in 1996 focusing on estate, elder, business, social needs and asset protection planning. He is the area's only board-certified Estate Planning Law Specialist*.

Quote of the Month

"The optimist
proclaims that we live in
the best of all possible
worlds, and the pessimist
fears this is true."

- James Branch Cabell

Parent Sanity Kit - *Continued*

Specifically, if your child is hurt or incapacitated while away at school, authorities may refuse to talk to you because of HIPAA medical privacy laws. A colleague recently told me of a woman whose daughter needed emergency surgery on her leg while away at college and the woman could not get involved in her child's care until she was able to present a signed Health Care Proxy and a HIPAA authorization form signed by her daughter.



The three documents your child need to avoid this situation are a Health Care Proxy, a Durable Power of Attorney and a HIPAA authorization form. Then you need a method so that these documents are readily available during an emergency. We supply our clients with a medical emergency access card that instructs the hospital how to obtain copies of these critical documents immediately. We call this our "Parent Sanity Kit". If you have a young adult at home, it's well worth the investment for the peace of mind knowing you can get involved immediately if an emergency strikes.

Just call us at 978-825-0033 so we can help you get started.

P.S. Even if you do not have teenagers at home, you likely know someone who does. Please forward this newsletter. It could prevent MANY headaches and hassles down the road.



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