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When Parents Become Parents…

To Their Grandchildren

You may be one of the 3 million grandparents, according to Census Bureau figures, who are raising their grandchildren: Not weekend visits, not periodic babysitting, not vacations in the summertime, but actually serving as the primary caregiver or caregivers.

While that may not be how you planned things, take heart. According to a 2011 Brigham Young University study, children who feel close to at least one grandparent exhibit "higher pro-social behaviors." (Pro-social behaviors include sharing, donating, volunteering, cooperating, helping others, etc.) "The bottom line is that grandparents have a positive influence on their grandkids that is distinct from the effect of the parent-child relationship."

Speaking of planning, update your estate plan as you would for other major life events like the birth of a child and divorce or remarriage. You may wish to adopt your grandchildren, therefore affording them the same estate planning consideration and benefits as your children. Consider appointing a guardian to take care of them if something happens to you or your spouse. Since your grandkids are naturally younger than your children, consider leaving assets in a Trust that takes into account their ages, as well as other considerations like divorce and creditor protection. As with your other beneficiaries, the goal is to provide for their futures as best you can.

Most importantly, understand that the situation may be as stressful and emotionally-taxing for your grandkids as it is for you. Encourage open and honest communication. Create as stable an environment as possible. And take care of yourself: Studies show that the grandparents who seek support and help are the ones who cope best with the added stress of raising their grandchildren.

https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/more-grandparents-raising-their-grandchildren
https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00735.x

When a Pet Is More Than a Companion

Pets are great company, but they also provide a number of tangible benefits—especially for seniors. Studies show pet-owning seniors tend to have lower blood pressure, require less pain medication after injury or surgery, be more active, enjoy greater mobility and physical health, and to be more confident and social. They even tend to live longer.

If that's not enough, nearly nine out of ten seniors say their pets help reduce stress, make them feel loved, and feel better about their lives.

So where can you find the perfect pet for a loved one? Shelters and adoption organizations are a great place to start. If a friend or family member could benefit from a service or emotional support animal, national agencies specialize in helping owners with specific needs. Pet therapy is also an option; some local organizations may offer periodic home visit with animals specifically trained for the purpose.

Research shows the health benefits provided by pets are undeniable. Plus, they're a tremendous amount of fun, a fact you didn't need a study to know is true.

There's an App for That

Digital Tools to Improve Seniors' Lives

The average American spends over five hours per day on their phones. Here are some ways to make that time more useful, productive, and even fun:

- **Medication management:** Studies show that nearly half of prescriptions filled are not taken as directed. The solution? Apps like MyMeds can help you manage your medications and generate alerts and reminders. Some can even alert a loved one if a dose gets missed.
- **Audiobooks:** Tired of small print? Want a more convenient way to "read"? Audiobook apps like Audible are a great alternative. You'll also be in good company; statistics show that over 70 million people listen to at least one audiobook per year.
- **Parking reminders:** We all sometimes forget where we parked. Google Maps includes a feature that allows you to set your parking location and then get directions back to your car (of course you can also get directions to anywhere you want to go).
- **Memory improvement:** Want to stay mentally active? Memory improvement apps contain hundreds of games, puzzles, and exercises. Some can even be played remotely with family and friends. Words With Friends, anyone?
- **Prescription discounts:** Providers like GoodRX and America's Pharmacy let you compare prices at different pharmacies, take advantage of sale prices, and find coupons that can be used from the app itself.
- **Password managers:** If remembering all your logins and passwords seems impossible, try a password management app like 1Password that securely locks all your information in a secure online "vault." Some make it even easier by auto-filling the login and password field!

Parting May Be Sweet Sorrow

But a Funeral Trust Can Help Ease Your Family's Burden

While most people prefer not to think about their own funerals, pre-planning can spare those you love additional heartache and stress at what will already be a difficult time. Pre-planning allows them to grieve and spend time remembering you instead of working through funeral arrangements. If you create a Funeral Trust, you can help them avoid figuring out how to pay for your funeral. Even if your estate has sufficient assets, accessing those funds quickly can sometimes be difficult.

Granted, you could pre-pay your expenses directly, through a funeral home. But what if you move to another area or state? What if your intentions change? What if inflation and price increases effect the services you wish to receive?

A Funeral Trust keeps your options open and provides other benefits as well. If the Trust is irrevocable, funds held in trust are exempt from Medicaid calculations. (On the flip side, while keeping the funds outside the funeral trust may allow you to maintain control, those assets may be subject to Medicaid qualification requirements.)

You also don't have to fully fund the Funeral Trust ahead of time. You can purchase a Burial Life Insurance policy (sometimes called Final Expense Insurance) payable to the Trust upon your death.

Another benefit of pre-planning your arrangements and creating a Funeral Trust is that it can help prevent emotional over-spending. Grieving loved ones are significantly less likely to make smart financial decisions. Plus, few are willing—much less interested—in comparing prices and shopping for services during such an emotional time. Pre-planning your arrangements removes the need for your family to make difficult decisions, and a Funeral Trust automatically sets a budget for the services to be received.

That might be the biggest benefit of a Funeral Trust. You'll gain peace of mind through knowing that your arrangements have already been planned and the expenses will be paid. Your family will be spared the emotional and financial burden of arranging and paying for your funeral. Which will allow them to do what you probably want most: Grieve together, comfort each other, reflect on the impact you made on their lives, and celebrate your life.

Choosing the right kind of Funeral Trust can be complicated, so call our office to determine the best estate planning strategy for your individual needs and circumstances.

Can You Guess this Legacy?

His father built the family house with saved money and leftover planks of wood and nails he scavenged from vacant lots. For three years he received death threats and required a police escort and FBI detail for himself and his family. His life seemed to mimic his career: long, grueling decades where, in the end, his values proved more notable than any triumphs of the moment.

Like making the All-Star team twenty-five times. Like being only one of two players to hit thirty home runs in a season fifteen times. Like making the Major League All-Century team. Like hitting 755 home runs, and breaking Babe Ruth's longtime record in the process.

And for winning the Presidential Medal of Freedom for being one of the first Black players to break the color line in the deep South and remaining undeterred in his pursuit of excellence, despite frequent encounters with racism—both during and after his career.

Henry ("Hank") Aaron is one of the all-time great baseball players, yet his uncommon decency and grace may have been his most important quality.

What will your legacy be?

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AMBLER | KEENAN | MITCHELL | JOHNSON is dedicated to providing cost effective service to our clients as they accumulate, preserve, and transfer wealth. We believe that an estate plan will be most effective when it is crafted by a team comprised of the client's most trusted advisors.

To check our current schedule of free estate planning seminars, schedule a review of your existing estate plan, or to arrange for an initial consultation, please contact AMBLER | KEENAN | MITCHELL | JOHNSON at (303) 407-1542 or at **www.Ambler-Keenan.com**.

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