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#Adulting Includes Estate Planning: Basic Estate Plans and Why Every Millennial Needs One

Millennials get a lot of attention. Media and companies analyze what we like and how we think to engage us in causes, attract us as consumers, and secure us as employees. This attention comes with stereotypes and criticisms of who we are, collectively, as millennials. Millennials can be perceived as lazy and narcissistic with misguided invincibility. In comparison with older generations, we can be seen as more likely to travel to exotic locations, participate in adventurous activities, live in the moment, and be socially conscious. We also tend to marry later in life and are saddled with more student loan debt than older generations, which can negatively impact access to disposable income and ability to acquire wealth.

These realities, as well as the millennial stereotypes, can lead some millennials to think that an estate plan is not necessary for them because 1) they are young and healthy; 2) they have little to no assets; and/or 3) they do not have spouses or children. These justifications, however, are insufficient to neglect executing an estate plan. A basic estate plan (durable power of attorney, healthcare advance directive, will, and perhaps a revocable trust) can be affordable and done quickly. The cost and time for drafting is often outweighed by the benefits.

A durable power of attorney allows the principal to designate whom he or she would want to manage his or her financial affairs, such as bill payment and banking, if he or she becomes incapacitated or physically unavailable. Although we may think we are invincible, an accident or illness can happen at any age. This would be especially important for millennials who take part in adventurous travel to account for an injury abroad or unavailability to sign financial documents.

A healthcare advance directive is equally as essential for millennials because it does for health decisions what the durable power of attorney does for financial ones. It provides who will make decisions if the millennial is incapacitated and outlines what medical decisions should be made. This ensures that the right person is making the right decisions, avoids family arguments over decision making, and avoids the need for a court to appoint a guardian. It is essential for every millennial, but especially those who live in the moment, travel abroad, and are adventurous as they may be more prone to injury.

A will provides a roadmap for loved ones when administering an estate by nominating an executor, who will handle the administration process; a guardian for any minor children; and disposing of assets. For millennials who have not already executed their own will, intestacy laws serve as their wills. These are the best guess the legislature could make on where people would leave their assets, and it might not be your plan. So, if a millennial wants to ensure that his or her pet or treasured music collection passes to the right people, such as a long-term significant other, he or she will need a will. For those millennials that are socially conscious, a will can allow you to make donations to those causes you care about even in death, when you may have more assets to dedicate to charitable giving. Most importantly, a will is essential for millennials with minor children to ensure their guardian is chosen by the millennial, not the Probate Court.

Revocable trusts can be the most efficient way to transfer assets upon death because, unlike a will, the millennial can manage and enjoy the assets in trust during his or her lifetime; asset management continues upon incapacity or death, avoiding the need for court-appointed guardianships; the costs, time, public nature, and frustration of probate is avoided if funded during one's lifetime; and trusts allow for tax advantages for the lucky few millennials who die with assets over the federal tax exemption. For millennial parents, a revocable trust can provide

for asset management for minor children, who are unable to own property or manage it for themselves.

We millennials, just like our parents and grandparents, need estate plans. Regardless of our wealth, age, or marital status, we owe it to ourselves and loved ones to be prepared for incapacity or death. It is important for every millennial to consult estate planning specialists in conjunction with other investment professionals to determine what plan best fits his or her estate. After all, do we really want to be perceived as narcissistic and lazy millennials who could not take a couple hours to meet with an attorney to provide our loved ones with a plan? Would it not be easier to live in the moment or travel if we knew our decisions and assets are protected?