Getting Married: Planning for the Unexpected

Marriage includes more than two people in love – other responsibilities could include kids, property, savings, and even a family business.

Death, disability, the loss of a job, and the possibility of divorce are never topics newly married couples are excited about exploring, but *not* planning for the unexpected can lead to financial consequences you may have never considered or be prepared to handle.

Here are some topics you will want to explore together:

- **Insurance.** Life, auto, homeowner's, disability and other types of insurance should all be considered depending on your assets and lifestyle. Don't forget that you may be able to realize significant savings from combining multiple types of coverage with one company.

- **Beneficiary review.** Beneficiaries are those people who you designate to receive assets should anything happen to you. Any insurance policies, individual retirement accounts (IRAs), and employer-sponsored retirement plans set up prior to getting married should be reviewed. If you want your spouse to receive the funds in the event of your death, you will need to change the beneficiary. Keep in mind that just because you are married, it doesn't mean that the beneficiary should automatically be your spouse – many people have policies that may protect their parents, kids from a previous marriage, or others instead.

- **Safeguarding important documents and account information.** When the unexpected happens, particularly to the partner who routinely managed family finances, the other partner may not know how to access accounts or who to contact for an insurance claim. Be sure to keep important documents, from wills to insurance policies to financial account information, in a secure location known to both partners.

- **Prenuptial Agreements.** Not just for the superrich, prenuptial agreements are common – particularly with those entering a marriage with substantial assets or the likelihood of earning substantial assets over time.

  Prenuptial agreements are contracts between partners that typically include provisions for division of property and spousal support in the event of divorce.

You may want to consider this agreement if:

  - One partner may inherit a large sum of money or a family business.
  - One partner brings substantial savings or other assets to the marriage.
  - One partner will support the other through college, graduate or professional school.
  - One partner has other financial responsibilities, such as the care of elderly parents or children from a previous marriage.
  - One partner is engaged in the practice of a profession with substantial earnings.

If you are considering a prenuptial agreement, seek the advice of an experienced attorney. And remember, for the agreement to be valid, each partner needs to be represented by *separate* attorneys.

- **Estate planning.** In the worst-case scenario, there's a chance that your loved ones will not receive the assets you feel they deserve. One of the first things many couples do after getting married, and particularly after having kids, is to create a will.

A will is a legal document that determines who will receive your assets, who will care for your children, and who will be responsible for managing your financial affairs after your death.

For other common estate-related topics such as powers of attorney, living wills, and trusts, please review our "Estate Planning" materials.

While some of these options seem complex, the good news is that most couples can perform some very simple tasks – such as creating a will and buying life insurance – quickly and easily.