



Preventing Family Feuds Over Your Personal Belongings

The passing of a loved one is a heartbreaking event, filled with grief and sorrow. But the aftermath can become even more painful if disagreements over their personal belongings tear your family apart. These disputes, especially when centered around meaningful objects, can leave lasting wounds that may never fully heal.

But it doesn't have to be this way. By understanding the emotional weight of possessions, the power of perception, and taking proactive steps, you can prevent that heartache and help your family get through this tough time without fighting over personal items. In this article, we'll explore practical strategies to ensure your final wishes are honored and your loved ones stay united, even in the midst of loss.

The Emotional Value of Personal Property

Personal property often holds immense sentimental value. Items like a grandmother's wedding ring, a father's vintage guitar, or a family photo album can evoke powerful emotions and memories. When these items are not clearly allocated in an estate plan, it can lead to disagreements among heirs who may feel entitled to them.

Consider a scenario where siblings inherit a house filled with their parents' belongings. Without clear guidance, disputes can arise over who gets what. One sibling may feel a deep connection to a particular item, while another might believe they deserve it simply because they were closer to their parents. These conflicts can strain relationships and lead to long-lasting rifts.

The Importance of Documentation

To prevent misunderstandings, it is essential to document your wishes regarding personal property. This can be done through a formal document, such as a will, or, at least in South Carolina, this can be done through a separate memorandum. In these documents, you can specify who should receive particular items.

Including a detailed inventory of your personal property is also advisable. This list should not only identify the items but also provide insights into their importance and any relevant stories. For example, if a beloved family friend created a painting or a relative built a certain piece of furniture, sharing that background can enhance its value in the recipient's eyes.

For items that may be tougher to accurately describe, such as jewelry, visual documentation is an invaluable part of your inventory. Take clear photographs of each item and label them according to your inventory list. This step helps identify items later and ensures there is no room for fighting due to ambiguity.

The Value of Open Communication and Thoughtful Planning

One of the most effective ways to minimize the risk of family feuds over your personal property is to have open and honest conversations about expectations and preferences long before you're gone. Here are some strategies to consider.

Start the conversation early.

While it may feel awkward to discuss such sensitive topics, it's far better to address them proactively. This allows for a more thoughtful and deliberate

discussion of everyone's wishes. Ideally, these conversations should occur when all parties are calm and emotionally prepared rather than in the midst of grief.

Make an inventory.

Make a comprehensive list of all your personal belongings, including their sentimental value and any specific requests or wishes you have associated with them. This inventory can be a crucial reference point for your family members after you're gone. If possible, involve your loved ones in this process so they understand your wishes and can ensure your voice is heard.

Let loved ones know about your decisions.

If you think there is the potential for conflict and hurt feelings even with a detailed memorandum, we recommend letting your loved ones know ahead of time what you have decided and why. While they may not be happy with the decision, at least they will know it was your decision and will not be shocked after something has happened.

Helping Your Family Sell Your Belongings With Care and Intention

Sometimes, your loved ones may need to sell your personal property to settle your estate, pay debts, or ensure your items are put to good use. Whether the items sold hold sentimental value or not, this can be another task ripe with conflict. This can be especially difficult with valuable items such as artwork or collections. Here are a few steps you can take to help with this process.

Assess the true value of your items.

Start by evaluating the worth of the items to be sold. This may involve hiring an appraiser, especially for valuable items such as antiques, artwork, jewelry, or collectibles. An appraiser can provide an objective assessment of an item's value, which can help prevent disputes over perceived worth and ensure a fair sale. For instance, I remember talking to a

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'BONE' VOYAGE *Exploring the Marvels of Your Skeletal System!*

Make no bones about it; our skeletons are a real rib-tickler of fascinating facts! From the impressive strength of our thigh bones to the tiny marvels of the inner ear, your bones are the unsung heroes of your body. So, rest your bones in a comfy chair because we are about to dig up some of the most shocking skeletal secrets.

Babies have more bones than adults.

Although babies are tiny, their bodies have many bones in a pudgy, little package. Human babies have about 300 bones compared to an adult's 206. Many extra bones are entirely or partly made of cartilage, allowing the baby to stay flexible in the womb. Over time, the bones fuse and decrease in number. Fracture rates are highest when kids are around ages 11–15, the critical time for significant growth spurts thanks to growth plates that close as we age.

Half of our bones are in our feet and hands.

Did you know that many of our bones are in the smaller extremities of our body? Nearly half of our 206 adult

bones are in our hands and feet! Each foot has 26 bones, and our hands both have 27 bones, which is 106 bones. Our hands even have a bonus bone called the pisiform, located on the outside edge of our wrists.

The funny bone is a nerve.

Have you ever hit your funny bone? Well, you are not hitting a bone at all. This area on the body is part of the ulnar nerve, which goes from your neck to your hand. Bone, muscle, and fat typically protect nerves, but a small portion of this nerve on the back of your elbow is more exposed. So, when you hit your funny bone, named for its location near the humerus bone (a homophone of "humorous"), you're really bumping into the ulnar nerve.

So, now that you've "boned up" on the most fascinating fossil facts, give your skeleton a little nod for the incredible things it does to support you and keep you moving!



A Quick Reminder for Business Owners

CORPORATE TRANSPARENCY ACT

As we mentioned a few months ago, the Corporate Transparency Act is now in effect, and failing to comply could be very expensive for your business.

Under the Corporate Transparency Act, small companies are now required to disclose the names of any owners who own 25% or more of the company and any members of the company who have "substantial control" over the company's activities.

In order to comply, a business must file an annual report with the following information on each owner or controller of the business to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN):

- Business name
- Current business address
- State in which the business was formed and its Entity Identification Number (EIN)
- Owner/controller's name, birth date, and address
- Photocopy of a government-issued photo ID (such as a driver's license or passport) of every direct or indirect owner or controller of the company

Failing to file the report could result in serious repercussions, from paying a fine of \$500 for every day the report is late up to imprisonment for two years.

These reports are due by the end of 2024 for businesses formed prior to 2024, within 90 days for companies formed this year, and within 30 days for businesses filed in 2025 and beyond.

An updated report must be filed if there is any change in the owners or members who have substantial control after the initial filing.

Does my business need to comply?

The Corporate Transparency Act is broadly written, so almost every small business will be required to comply with the new reporting rules — but not all.

Let's break it down ...

The new rule applies to any company that is created by filing a formation document with the Secretary of State or a similar office, such as corporations and limited liability companies (LLCs).

Nonprofits, publicly traded companies, and regulated companies like banks and investment advisors are exempt from the rule. Large companies are also exempt if they have 20 or more full-time employees in the U.S. and generate \$5 million in sales.

And if you have an LLC or corporation you created but aren't actively using to run a business, that company is also exempt due to its inactivity as long as it does not own any assets.

If you aren't sure if your company is required by the Corporate Transparency Act to file a report, give us a call. Time is running out to get these filed, but the good news is there is still time if you haven't quite gotten around to it yet.

-TC

TAKE A BREAK!

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client years ago about a coin collection he had been working on for decades. As we discussed this, his spouse admitted she actually had no idea how to tell the valuable coins from the fairly worthless ones, and the client admitted he had everything mixed together without any easy way to differentiate items. We recommended putting together an inventory of the most valuable coins with pictures and setting those aside in a special place so anyone needing to liquidate the collection later would know which items to focus on.

Choose the right selling method.

Depending on the type and value of your belongings, your loved ones will need to choose a selling method. For everyday household items, a yard sale or estate sale might be appropriate. For more valuable items, an auction house, consignment shop, or online marketplace may be the way to go. Giving your family clear instructions on where you would recommend they sell special items, such as artwork or a coin collection, can be very helpful.

Enlist the help of an estate sale company.

If your estate contains a large number of items or your family is overwhelmed by the process, hiring a professional estate sales company can be a game-changer. These companies handle everything — pricing items, advertising the sale, managing the event, and disposing of any unsold items. They typically charge a percentage of the sales, but their expertise can make the process smoother and less stressful.

Leave a Legacy of Harmony, Not Conflict

Family disputes over your personal belongings can add immense pain to an already difficult time. But by understanding the emotional significance of your possessions, the role of perception, and taking proactive steps, you can minimize conflicts and preserve familial relationships.

Your loved ones deserve to grieve with dignity and respect, and not be embroiled in bitter disputes. Take the time now to put a plan in place so you can rest assured your final wishes will be honored and your family will stay out of court and conflict after you're gone.

This is the lasting legacy you can leave behind — not just the material objects you've accumulated over a lifetime, but the gift of harmony, understanding, and compassion for those you hold most dear.

How We Help You Prevent Family Feuds Over Personal Belongings

Family disputes over personal property can cause significant pain and tension at a time when loved ones should come together. By working with us, you can ensure your belongings are distributed according to your wishes, without conflict or confusion. With careful thought, clear communication, and the right tools, your plan will keep your family united, even in the midst of grief. And you'll gain the peace of mind knowing that your wishes will be honored and your loved ones will be supported long after you're gone.

If you or someone you love need to begin planning to ensure there are no family feuds after you are gone, be sure to give us a call to schedule a time with one of our estate planning attorneys, who can help guide you as you create a plan to keep your family from having fights or legal disputes after you are gone.

-Charity and TC



Pumpkin Pie French Toast

INGREDIENTS

Inspired by AllRecipes.com

- 1 1/2 tsp vegetable oil, or as needed
- 1/2 cup half-and-half
- 1/4 cup canned pumpkin purée
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts
- 8 slices day-old bread
- Maple syrup, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Lightly oil a skillet and heat over medium heat.
2. Whisk half-and-half, pumpkin purée, eggs, cinnamon, vanilla, and pumpkin pie spice together in a bowl. Stir in walnuts until evenly distributed.
3. Place 1 slice of bread in the bowl and let it soak briefly to coat both sides. Lift bread to let excess liquid drip back into the bowl, then transfer to the hot skillet.
4. Cook for 2–3 minutes or until golden brown, then flip and cook the other side until done.
5. Stir batter to redistribute walnuts and repeat with other slices of bread, cooking in several batches if necessary.
6. Serve warm with maple syrup.

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DISCOVER VIENNA

City of Dreams: From Sublime Music to Museums of Death

If you yearn to visit a European city rich in imperial grandeur, music history, and macabre memorials to death, Vienna is for you. And that odd mix of attractions reflects only a small part of the city's diversity.

This former frontier city of the Roman Empire expanded to become the glittering capital of a great empire for centuries. The Habsburg dynasty's sponsorship of the arts made Vienna a global center of classical music. Home to Beethoven, Vivaldi, Mozart, Mahler, and Strauss, Vienna hosts frequent performances of classics by these and other composers.

The city's museums, churches, and charnel houses offer macabre tributes to death. Piled on the floor and lining the walls of a charnel house beneath St.

Stephen's Cathedral are the skulls and other bones of 11,000 people, according to Atlas Obscura. The Habsburgs created elaborate containers to preserve their embalmed entrails after death. The city's Crime Museum houses relics of famous murders, including the mummified head of a known killer.

Fortunately, the Habsburgs were readers, too. The Austrian National Library, a baroque masterpiece, is home to 2.5 million books. In a Gothic twist, library employees may slip silently in and out of hidden passageways behind the stacks if you watch closely.

The city is also noted for its intellectual history. Sigmund Freud lived and worked in Vienna, which led to its nickname, "City of Dreams." The

philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein also worked in Vienna, where he made many contributions to logic in mathematics and language.

On the lighter side, Vienna's Spanish Riding School offers a unique opportunity to see its famous Lippizaner horses perform dressage. The Imperial Butterfly House is a tropical oasis housing about 400 beautiful insects. Visitors to the "lost garden," a vast topiary maze at the Habsburgs' summer palace, can enjoy tales of courtiers frolicking among the web of manicured hedges — not only for playful exploration but also for illicit romance.

Taken together, these diverse attractions promise travelers to Vienna a visit to remember!