



GEIGER

LAW & MEDIATION
Steering to Solutions

June 2020

Divorce Finalized. Now What? Plan for Your Future!

One of our sons recently graduated college and started graduate school. A month or so after he settled into an amazing apartment four blocks from his new school, I asked how he was doing. He reported that graduate studies were challenging but he felt prepared. He had developed friends at school. However, he said that moving to a new city and new place had been more difficult than he anticipated.

He loved his new life in an urban setting with everything within walking distance. His new neighborhood was diverse and friendly. All was well. Except that he still experienced troubles adjusting to new circumstances. He left the comfortable confines of a smaller college campus with close friends that he had called home for the last four years. He knew where to find whatever he needed in the old college town. He knew which supermarkets and shops to frequent on particular days. In sum, all his “routine” was gone and, with it, his comfort level.

Our son was already on his way to developing his new normal and new comfort zone at graduate school. He was surprised at himself with this unease during transition even though he appreciated that it would be temporary. Nonetheless, it was quite real to him. Update: Six months later and he appears fine and settled in on all fronts. Now he just wants a dog.

I shared with our son a lesson I learned long ago. There are the Big Three life events which inescapably and undeniably cause much stress: changing your relationship status; changing your address; and changing jobs/schools. He was experiencing two of three of these stress-inducing events at once. Just like our son, anyone experiencing divorce confronts one of the Big Three stressors, perhaps even all three at one time.

The divorce process itself is traumatic. But what about the time when the dust begins to settle on that process and you begin to find your own new normal and your new comfort zone? It may assist to take stock of where you are and better define (or plan) for any new direction. The unknown and unknowable future may be frightening. However, you need not address the challenges on your own.

In addition to any network of family and friends, you can and should turn to others who can assist in various parts of your life. If not done, establish a relationship with a financial advisor or wealth management professional. Having your own accountant at this time will assist you. Secure the services of an insurance broker who understands your new risk profile. These type of professionals can assist to ensure that your assets such as bank accounts, 401(k) plans, pension plans, and insurance policies properly identify new beneficiaries and stakeholders as needed.

And think about your estate, most especially if you already have an existing estate plan in place. Once a divorce is finalized, an existing estate plan is usually outdated, or worse, contrary to your new circumstances, desires and goals.

Any meaningful estate plan includes so much more than a will. You should use an estate plan to address potential needs during your life as well as plan for when you pass. Your estate plan, in addition to a will or trust structure, at a minimum, should include the following:

<u>Document</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
General Durable Power of Attorney	If you become incapacitated, a designated representative(s) can manage your business affairs per your specific instructions.
Advanced Health Care Power of Attorney	If you become incapacitated, a designated representative(s) can make medical decisions, including life-sustaining choices, on your behalf per your specific instructions.
Living Will	Expression of end of life medical choices.
HIPPA Authorizations	Allows listed individuals access to your medical information if you are not able to authorize such access.

These documents serve as your protection if you are not able to express your wishes during your life. There is no need to go to court. There is no delay.

Any estate planning documents you created during your marriage most probably included your now ex-spouse as a beneficiary or designated the ex-spouse as the person authorized to make medical or business decisions on your behalf. You need to determine your desired new structure to manage your affairs. Planning ahead will prevent costly and time consuming delays if you are ever incapacitated. More importantly, your instructions, desires and wishes will be clearly spelled out for all.

The stress and challenges of new circumstances brought on with divorce cannot be avoided. They nonetheless can be managed. Part of these new beginnings should include proper estate planning to meet your new conditions. We can assist with your estate planning needs. We also can assist in directing you to financial advisors, accountants and insurance brokers who can assist in other areas if help is needed there as well.

To learn more about comprehensive estate plans, contact Michael Geiger at Geiger Law & Mediation. Michael's direct line is (901) 219-5549.

