

The Power of One: Navigating Life As a Widow



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The unexpected challenge of a spouse's death can be overwhelming. You have to make so many critical decisions when you're emotionally drained. Since it's hard to know where to start, we've created this simple set of action steps, important questions and key documents. It can help you organize your thoughts and find some sense of control at this very difficult time.

Take action: What to do first

- Go to the county office for 20+ copies (originals) of your spouse's death certificate
- Surround yourself with a team of trusted professionals
- Notify your spouse's employer and ask their human resources department how quickly you can get COBRA health care coverage started
- Notify the insurance companies
- Collect all the paperwork on the checklist (Refer to page 2)

Lean on your professional team: Have important conversations

Questions for your attorney

1. Do I need a new will?
2. Do I need a new trust?
3. What do I need to get done in the next 90 days?
4. Is there anything I need to be aware of to protect myself and my children?

Questions for your investment professional

1. Do I have enough income to last throughout my lifetime?
2. Can I afford to keep my house?
3. What do I do with insurance proceeds, and are they taxed?
4. Does my insurance cover my children?
5. Do I have enough for my children's college education?
6. How does this affect my Medicare coverage?
7. What happens with my spouse's required minimum distributions (RMDs) and retirement assets?
8. What are my Social Security options?

Questions for your accountant

1. Do I have tax payments due?
2. What are your estimates for me/the estate over the next 12 months?
3. How does my spouse's death affect my future tax payments?
4. Can you work with my investment professional to cover all the bases?



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Take care of you: Find your way forward

- Surround yourself with a strong support system, e.g., family and friends
- Join support groups for widows in your area
- Stay active and involved in your social and recreational activities

Gather key documents: Use this checklist

Documents	Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Birth certificate	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Marriage certificate	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Deed to your home, all real property	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> List of credit cards	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Titles/lease to house, plane, boats, autos	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Employer stock option paperwork	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Living will	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Living trust	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> POA (Power of Attorney)/DPOA (Durable Power of Attorney)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Your own medical directive	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> List of tangible assets	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Insurance policies, any and all	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Current brokerage statements	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Recent copy of joint tax return	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Mortgage payment statement	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Military discharge papers	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Business partnership agreements	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art and jewelry owner certificates of value	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Charitable trust documents	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> LLC documents	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Prenuptial agreement	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship papers	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Burial contracts	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Organ donation form	_____

This material should be used as helpful hints only. Each person's situation is different. You should consult your financial advisor or investment professional or other relevant professional before making any decisions.

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