

## **Tools for Families in Transition**

I know the situation far too well. A parent has died or is losing their mind. Your family is close but not in sync. In fact, as you've grown, you're more episodic in communications than you ever imagined possible. One family member has stepped up — or has to — for the stages of these inevitable transitions. Caregiving and ethically impossible medical decisions amidst a medical system that is often falling apart or crazy. Financial and legacy questions that one family member should really know or you all wish you had asked more questions about. Can you trust each other?

What will happen? Will your parent or their memory or surviving spouse or family stay in tact? What disasters or surprises lay ahead?

As the family convener, you are once again at it. You are trying by email, phone and through your imitable style to get their attention.

You need to meet. You need help in communicating together. Half your sibling or executor team wants results and decisions not process. Half your family and team know that dialogue is essential. Can the twain meet? Resistance follows all around. Dysfunction permeates our fragile connections. Mistrust and old triggers raise their difficult heads. Here are a few tools to help, questions you might consider to bring your family together at this, OH so important time.

- How will you get everyone to a space of agreement?
- What will you do if there is not consensus (and there rarely is!)?
- What decisions need to be made, when do they need to be made, and who needs to be involved in making them?
- Who can hold the space for your family to negotiate?
- How will you increase the emotional health of this situation?

We offer the following sample letter or statement to family, to help you get on the path to bringing everyone together.

Dear family,

Isn't the greatest legacy of our parent(s) our connection with each other?  
Isn't it worth preserving at all cost?

I suggest we use a facilitator, wealth counselor, coach or some trusted third party-advisor now to help us get on page with each other and to truly listen to each other. Then we can come to some consensus together on priorities and next steps. How we do this is so important to all our sanity and to keeping this family together. Would you do this for our family please?

Here's how it could likely work:

- We each bring 1-2 recommendations to the table of people we have heard or are suggested would be good. A person someone in a similar situation has used. Someone we can check references on.
- We write up a statement of our goals and hopes.
- We have 1-2 of us interview the candidates.

This all takes a few hours of the next month. Then, in a month, the consultant emails us questions based on our goals for working with them, and interviews each family member confidentially or asks questions of us each, privately by email. We meet and get a summary and guidance and have someone to help facilitate our planning and dialogue.

It's all done over 2-3 or 6 months. We have help. We pay a little, a few thousand dollars for preserving our mutual respect.

We carry forward our family care and love. This to me is a vital necessity. I ask for your agreement or willingness.

Your loving family member,  
Joshua