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For Yours Truly Personalized Valentine's Gifts for the Super Sentimental

Nothing says "I love you" like a personalized gift. Let that special someone in your life know how much you care by giving them a custom-made Valentine's Day gift this year. With so many different artists taking advantage of this sentiment to create amazing one-of-a-kind pieces for their customers to give as gifts, you can personalize just about anything these days. Here are a few great websites to shop for your favorite sentimental person:

Vinylify.com

Create a playlist on a vinyl record.

Nostalgic for the days of mix tapes to express how much you care? For the music lover you love, create a custom vinyl record with a hand-picked playlist. Vinylify allows you to simply upload the music you want to include on your record and create the cover using their templates. They'll make your one-of-a-kind record and send it to your door!

Etsy.com

Personalize a signature bracelet.

Memorialize your signature in jewelry. Transform actual handwriting into a unique piece of jewelry for your Valentine with Grace Personalized jewelry. Your personalized memorial signature bracelet can be one line or two and comes in silver, gold filled, and rose gold. The lovely pieces are handmade to order.

Uncommongoods.com

Create a personalized wine barrel.

Create a personalized miniature American white oak wine barrel for the wine connoisseur you adore. Uncommon Goods also sells whiskey and rum-making kits, and family vintage wine boxes. Is your Valentine not much of a drinker? Look for the custom cribbage boards, throw blankets, and embroidered pillows sold here as well.



BUSINESS & CHILDREN: There is No Easy Answer



If you started and grew your own business, you know how much time and work you had to put into it. Building your own business requires a lot of sacrifice, and it can be tough to know how and when to begin transitioning a business to your children. Passing a business to your children will require tax and legal considerations, and of course, you want to make sure the business continues to be successful even when you are no longer a part of it. You're not alone, but you need to understand that the odds are against you unless you have a plan in place.

Forbes recently reported that LESS than one-third of family businesses make it to the second generation. That means less than one-third of business owners successfully transition their business to their children. After that, half of those businesses that successfully made it to the second generation fail to make it to the third generation. That means that fewer than one out of five businesses will make it past the original owner's children.

One of the biggest factors leading to the collapse of even successful businesses is the failure to plan how the business is going to pass from one generation to the next. For instance, parents may, while trying to be fair, leave a business equally to their four children. Unfortunately, a decade later when the business is passed on, the kids may not be able to agree on how to run the business, which can lead to fights, stalemates, and ultimately lawsuits or some of the children leaving the business to start a competing business. These are major problems that could have been addressed had the family taken the time to really discuss the issues with an attorney and put together a plan.

We have seen some very successful plans implemented. However, we find that each family's situation is a little different, so there is no "best" approach that fits everyone equally. For instance, here are some of the questions we want clients to answer as they decide how to transition their business.

Are all of your children going to actively participate? If not, do we want to have voting and non-voting shares? How are we going to incentivize those who work in the business day-to-day while still being fair to the ones who only own non-voting shares?

How soon do you want your children to take over? The longer your timeline, the better for tax purposes. Also, do you want to retain the final say in business decisions even when you're not a majority shareholder? We can work out the transition so you can give away a lot of the business for tax purposes without completely giving up control until you're ready. It is not uncommon for parents to begin this planning 10 or more years before they plan to retire, and the earlier you begin planning, the more flexible your options are.

Do we need to start giving certain children some management experience now? It might make sense to have a child or several children each running different departments now so you can help them out if they need advice or assistance. Better now when you can help than later when you're no longer involved.

If our children aren't interested in the business, what are some other options? Should you consider selling the business? Should you consider allowing your employees to buy you out through an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP)? If you want to prepare the business to be sold, it might mean beginning to clean some things up internally before putting the business on the market to make it more attractive to future buyers. We will need to discuss how to get a professional valuation and discuss how to market a business for sale. This can be a great discussion to have even if you're a few years away from actually being ready to sell the business, especially if you're hoping to get top dollar.

Again, it's a lot to think about, but I tell clients that the sooner we begin having the discussions, the better off your family will be down the road.

~ TC and Charity

Fostering Creativity in Your Kids



To encourage creativity in your children, start by getting creative yourself. What art supplies can you make available to your kids to get their creative energy going? Rather than just crayons and paper, why not have an entire box of supplies full of items like empty toilet paper rolls, cotton swabs, feathers, buttons, and cardboard boxes? These unconventional supplies can make some amazing creative projects.

Aside from art, there are plenty of creative outlets that kids should start exploring. Consider giving them an old camera that you don't need and telling them to take some pictures of things that are interesting to them. You just might be surprised to find out what the world looks like through your child's eyes.

What about acting? Dig through your closet and see what embarrassing old fashion pieces could make a great costume for you and your kid — or take your kiddo to a dollar store to buy a few inspirational items. Then, assume the role of a character and ask your child to do the same. If they're really feeling it, commission them to come up with a script to act out. Let your imaginations run wild.

Music is another huge creative outlet that's worth cultivating. Your kids can start embracing music with ordinary household items like pots, pans, wooden spoons, and glasses. It won't be long before you've got a clinking, banging symphony. Don't forget to dance to the homemade groove!

These are just a few suggestions, but the sky's the limit when it comes to creativity. Your part is to give the kids space to experiment, even if it doesn't always make sense to you. If your child is making a picture and chooses to make the grass blue, for example, don't tell them they're wrong. Instead, ask them why they made that decision.

Creativity doesn't have to be expensive, fancy, or complicated. In fact, you'll often find more creativity when you've set some limitations. So go ahead and give your kids the gift of a pressure-free environment for exploration, imagination, and experimentation — and foster a lifelong love of creativity in them!

Mirror Mirror

What Can Your Body Language Do for You?

It's said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and that extends even to the subconscious. When humans are attracted to each other, platonically or otherwise, they have a tendency to mirror one another's mannerisms, inflections, and posture. But what if you learned to harness these subconscious signals of endearment and use them to your advantage? In the 1970s, a professor at UCLA discovered that subjects based 93 percent of their perceptions of others on nonverbal cues during emotional communications. Which means that only 7 percent of what people are noticing about you is what's coming out of your mouth. Every second your body is sending out a message — don't you think it's time you took control of what it has to say?

We all know about the effects of posture on confidence, but what about relationships? Can you make yourself more likable just by moving a certain way? Science suggests that it's possible. Studies show that basic and subtle mirroring of the person you're trying to make an impression upon can increase subconscious feelings of fondness and trust. Try adopting a word from your boss's favorite phrase, or if you're out to coffee with someone new, and they wrap their hands around their cup, try doing the same. Open your body, don't close yourself off with crossed arms or by slouching. Extend eye contact, just by a second or two. Subtle vulnerability creates a sense of comfort and well-being. Small movements that suggest underlying common ground send subconscious signals of trustworthiness. Remember, subtlety is key; if they notice your mirroring on a conscious level, it may actually do more harm than good. So the next time you're not sure what to say to solidify a bond, let your body do the talking.



Avoid Frustration in Sad Times

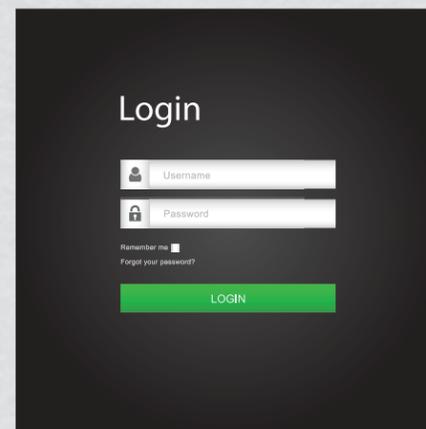
When someone comes to us who has recently lost a spouse or loved one, they often tell us there are several things they wish their spouse or loved one had done. The first is, of course, to have updated their estate plan within the last couple of years. I think we all know this is important. However, the second major area of frustration is not knowing how to handle the deceased person's bills or how to contact their friends. Below are a few tips to help your own family members avoid those frustrations.

1. First, be sure to keep an updated list of passwords handy. This can be accomplished, while still keeping those passwords secure, by making a written list that is regularly updated and kept in your home safe or safe deposit box at the bank, or by keeping a password-protected file on your computer with a full list of those passwords. Also, make sure to include the answers to the security questions that are sometimes required in addition to the password itself. Make sure the person you are trusting with this information knows how to get to it in an emergency. This should include both passwords needed to pay bills and those needed to access your email and social media accounts.

2. Along with the list of passwords, it can be really helpful to have a list of all of the monthly bills that need to be paid (mortgage, utilities, car payments, etc.), how to pay them, and what day of the month they are due. We have had numerous cases where the spouse that handled all of this passed away and left the surviving spouse with no idea of exactly what needed to be paid and when, which can be very frustrating.

3. Finally, for those of you running businesses, keep in mind you need to do the same thing for any of these types of tasks that only you handle within your business. Be sure either a family member or trusted employee knows how to handle these tasks in the event you suddenly pass away. This will help ensure that everything continues to run smoothly even in the case of an emergency.

These are just a few things to consider when planning for your family's future. If you or a loved one have additional concerns or need to begin planning, feel free to call us to set an appointment so we can sit down and discuss your individual concerns.



SUDOKU

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ANSWERS

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6	1	8	9	3	2	5	7	4
8	7	1	3	5	9	2	4	6
9	5	4	2	6	7	1	8	3
3	6	2	8	4	1	7	5	9