Family Inheritance Conversation Starter

A simple checklist to help your family build clarity and reduce stress before a crisis.

Before you talk

- [ ] Choose a low-stress time (not during a crisis).
- [ ] Decide who should be included (spouse/partner, adult children, executor/trustee).
- [ ] Set a simple goal for the first conversation (clarity, not dollar amounts).
- [ ] Schedule 30–45 minutes and name it (example: “Family Planning Check-In”).

Values and intentions

- [ ] Share what you want your money to do for the family long-term.
- [ ] Explain what “fair” means to you (equal, equitable, needs-based, business-related).
- [ ] Clarify what you want to prevent (confusion, conflict, rushed decisions).
- [ ] Identify what you want preserved (home, heirlooms, business, traditions).

Key roles and responsibilities

- [ ] Confirm who is the executor/personal representative.
- [ ] Confirm who has power of attorney (financial).
- [ ] Confirm who has healthcare proxy/medical decision authority.
- [ ] Identify a backup person for each role.
- [ ] Confirm who will coordinate immediate logistics (bills, documents, notifications).

Where everything is located

- [ ] Note where estate documents are stored (physical and digital).
- [ ] Identify who has access to the safe, lockbox, or password manager.
- [ ] List attorney name and contact info.
- [ ] List financial advisor name and contact info (if applicable).
- [ ] List accountant name and contact info (if applicable).

Account and asset map (high level)

- [ ] Bank accounts (where they are held).
- [ ] Retirement accounts (401(k), IRA, pension).
- [ ] Life insurance policies (carrier and purpose).
- [ ] Brokerage/investment accounts.
- [ ] Real estate (primary home, rental, land).
- [ ] Business interests or side income streams.
- [ ] Vehicles or high-value property.
- [ ] Digital assets (online accounts, subscriptions, stored files, photos).

Beneficiaries and instructions

- [ ] Confirm beneficiaries are up to date (retirement and insurance).
- [ ] Clarify the general plan for distribution (no dollar amounts needed).
- [ ] Identify special situations (minor children, disability, blended family).
- [ ] Confirm guardianship plan if relevant.
- [ ] Note any charitable intentions.

Debt, bills, and cash flow continuity

- [ ] Identify bills that must stay paid (mortgage, utilities, insurance).
- [ ] List where bills are paid from (which account).
- [ ] Confirm what’s on autopay and where.
- [ ] Identify outstanding debts (mortgage, loans, credit cards).
- [ ] Assign who will handle the first 30–60 days of finances.

Real estate and “keep vs sell” preferences

- [ ] Primary home: keep, sell, or decide later.
- [ ] Rental property: keep, sell, or assign a decision-maker.
- [ ] Personal items: outline how heirlooms should be distributed.

Taxes and timing basics

- [ ] Identify where the most recent tax return is stored.
- [ ] Confirm who prepares taxes and how to contact them.
- [ ] Note what documents will be needed (W-2s, 1099s, statements).
- [ ] Flag any key deadlines your family should know.

Next steps

- [ ] Write down open questions for professionals to address.
- [ ] Schedule a follow-up conversation within 30 days.
- [ ] Assign one person to create a “Family Finance Index”.
- [ ] Set an annual review date for updates.

Simple conversation prompts

- [ ] “If something happened to me, would you know who to call first?”
- [ ] “Do you know where our documents and account list are kept?”
- [ ] “What would you need from me to feel prepared?”
- [ ] “My goal is clarity, not pressure—here’s what I want you to understand.”

www.harriswealthcoach.com