

Death and Estates- Practical Tips for Lessening your Stress

When someone close to you passes away, it is an emotional and overwhelming time in your life. While you are dealing with your grief, there are several practical and sometimes complicated matters that need attention: funeral arrangements, obtaining death certificates, obtaining a copy of the will, probate, valuing and distributing personal belongings, preparing home for sale and so forth. The valuing and distributing of household goods and personal items can be particularly onerous tasks.

My advice is instead of looking at the project as a whole, to list the tasks required so you can tackle them in manageable pieces. It is far less overwhelming to organize and approach each item separately.

Inheritance: Set aside and tag all items that have been bequeathed in the will to specific beneficiaries. Arrange a time with family and close friends to gather at the home. Open up discussions to discover what others might like to have from the estate; with agreement from the executor and the family members if at all possible, keeping in mind the wishes of the deceased. For the items for which there is agreement, set those aside and arrange a time for all items to be picked up. When there is an item requested by more than one beneficiary for the estate, there are a number of options, depending on the direction in the Will, but one suggestion is to create an auction of the item(s) between the interested individuals, with the proceeds going to the estate.

Appraisals: The estate may have personal and household items of value that will need to be appraised if the estate goes to probate. The items most frequently requiring appraisal include furniture, jewelry, art, coin and stamp collections.

Selling: There are few options that can be used to sell furniture and household items remaining in the home. Hosting an “**Estate Sale**” by placing an ad in your local paper and posting the sale on-line, contacting an auctioneer to see what might be of interest to them and paying a commission or posting items for sale on-line through sites such as Kijiji or Facebook marketplace. In deciding which method to use, keep in mind how much of your time you are willing to spend for the proceeds you will generate from the sale.

Donate: If you have the power under the terms of the Will to donate unclaimed household and personal belongings, there are many organizations in every community that would benefit from such action. I have named just a few examples I have used below.

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

Winston Churchill

- **Feel good** about donating knowing that items donated will help others

- **Goodwill** helps people overcome barriers to gain access to work and reach their full potential
- **Habitat for Humanity** helps struggling families with affordable housing. They will pickup larger items at no charge as long as they are on ground level and will issue the estate a tax receipt in some cases.
- **Salvation Army (Thrift Store)** National Recycling Operations role is both to generate funds and to help to influence positively any community in which it operates.

Examples of items that can be donated

- Clothes
- Shoes, boots and boot mats
- Kitchen Items
- Vinyl Records DVD's and CD's
- Picture frames and wall art
- Couches and Chairs
- Coffee and End Tables
- Kitchen and Dining room tables
- Dressers and bed frames
- Hangers
- Desk and Desk Chairs
- T.V. Stands
- Blinds and drapes
- Vacuums and carpet cleaners
- Trophies
- Turntables, receivers and speakers
- Electronics old or not working
- Carpets
- Books

While you are working through the belongings of the estate, you may come across various personal items such as photos, homemade videos and memorabilia. These items may be emotionally hard to process in the early stages of grief. One suggestion is to box them up and take them to your home to go through later when you are better equipped to deal with the memories. If space is an issue, consider digitalizing these items, perhaps creating a memory book for later generations to experience.

Final Thoughts: If you are still feeling overwhelmed or do not have the time to take on all of the tasks, consider retaining the services of someone who has experience in such matters. SWOT Services can help do some or all of this for you, objectively and compassionately. We have the contacts and the expertise to lessen your stress, Just give us a call.