

Social Media Friends Versus Connecting In-Person

How to Strike a Healthy Balance

There's a definite benefit to online relationships, with social media making it easy to build a network of friends, acquaintances, and a professional network of colleagues and connections.

However, there is an even bigger benefit to building and maintaining in-person friendships. Increasing your number of close friends correlates to better health and well-being. A clinical review of nearly 150 studies found that people with strong social ties were not only happier, they had a 50% better chance of living longer than those with weaker ties. In fact, the health risk of having fewer friends was similar to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and more dangerous than being obese or not exercising, in terms of decreasing your lifespan.

Even so, you don't need dozens of close friends. According to British anthropologist Robin Dunbar, all you need are a few different types of friends: A handful of best friends, like your significant other, and one or two other close friends. About 10 or so people with whom you have "great affinity" and interact with frequently. Lastly, other acquaintances you're "friendly" with, such as social media friends.

The key is to actively nurture the most important relationships in your life. An easy way to do that is to think about what you can do to help the people closest to you become happier, and then act on those ideas.

While you care about your casual friends, close friends act on their feelings, reach out, step in, step up, and sometimes step outside their comfort zone to do something selfless. Real friends offer encouragement, support, and take action.

And real friends do it in person—because that's the way to truly connect.

Avoid Family Disputes Over Asset Distributions

Transfer New Assets into Your Trust

You put a lot of thought into creating your estate plan. But what happens when you buy a new home, inherit a significant sum of money, or purchase a large life insurance policy? Suddenly, there's a hole in your well-thought-out estate plan. Fortunately, that hole is easy to repair.

Just as major life events, such as marriage, divorce, birth of a child, etc., make it critical to revise your estate plan, so does acquiring a new asset.

Some examples of plan updates you might need include: taking title of a new home in a revocable Trust; placing your inheritance in a Special Needs Trust to provide for a child with a long-term medical condition; or placing your life insurance policy in a revocable or irrevocable Trust.

As a rule of thumb, anytime you acquire a new asset you must decide whether to transfer that asset into your Trust to carry out your wishes. Ensure your loved ones are taken care of the way you intended and avoid possible disputes. Sound complicated? Don't worry, we're here to help! Call us today with any questions you might have about assets or recent changes in your family situation.

The Stress Factor

Simple Tips to Reduce Your Stress

Job pressures, financial pressures, family pressures: If you're like many people, stress is a fact of life. While you may never be able to control the sources of your stress, you can control how you respond to it.

To reduce stress, embrace the four "A"s:

- ➔ **Avoid unnecessary stress.** Start saying "no" more often. Avoid people who increase your anxiety levels. Whittle your to-do list down to three or four essential items; after all, anything beyond that is more of a wish list—and can be a source of stress.
- ➔ **Alter the situation.** Be willing to compromise more, both with other people and with your own expectations. Actively schedule "you" time; make recharging and refreshing an important part of your day. If something is bothering you, talk about it. Bottling up your feelings only adds to your stress levels.

➔ **Adapt your perspective.** Reframe how you view a problem. Stuck in a doctor's waiting room? See that as a chance to catch up on your reading. Adjust your standards. Be grateful for what you have rather than longing for what you don't.

➔ **Accept what you can't change.** You can't control the weather. Or your boss. Or how a family member treats you. Focus instead on controlling how you react to things you can't change. When you stop trying to control what you can't control you might start enjoying certain aspects of those very things.

Remember, fear of the unknown is a huge stressor. A great way to overcome this common cause of anxiety is to put an estate plan in place or update an existing one to take care of the people you love. Make an appointment with our office to ensure your plan provides for your loved ones, both financially and legally.

Worrying about their futures is a stress you can definitely avoid.

Different Beneficiaries, Different Trusts

One Size Does Not Fit All

Your family and children are unique. The people you love have different needs, abilities, and goals. That's why choosing the right Trust for the right situation is extremely important.

Here are a few options:

Special Needs Trust: Designed for an individual who is, or might in the future be, in need of public benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Medicaid. This Trust allows the beneficiary to enjoy the use of assets held in the Trust for his or her benefit while still qualifying for essential, needs-based government assistance.

Asset Protection Trust: Designed to protect assets from creditors, this Trust is also used to allow a trustee to have complete discretion and control over distributions. An Asset Protection Trust can also control when or if assets can be sold, ensuring that a "spend-thrift" beneficiary cannot spend the money as he or she sees fit.

Divorce Protection Trust: This Trust can be used to keep certain assets separate from a spouse's assets, which also allows those assets to be inherited separately.

Incentive Trust: A Trust with a third-party trustee that includes a distribution standard for the beneficiary such as completion of a certain level of education, choosing to work in a specific profession, reaching a certain age, or whatever conditions you stipulate.

Family Trust: When one spouse dies, that spouse's assets go into a Trust that is for the benefit of the surviving spouse and the couple's children. This Trust helps avoid probate and also allows another person to take over upon your death or if you become incapacitated. The trustee makes distributions to the beneficiaries based on standards stipulated in the Trust.

Marital Trust: Designed for couples with significant assets. The current estate tax exclusion amount is \$11.18 million. At the death of a spouse, that amount goes to the family or into a Family Trust. Remaining assets go into a Marital Trust, avoiding estate taxes at the death of the first spouse. Plus, a Marital Trust and a Family Trust can help protect assets from remarriage by the surviving spouse and can ensure assets go to the deceased spouse's children and not to children of a surviving spouse's new marriage.

Charitable Trust: A Charitable Trust benefits a designated charitable or qualifying community organization. It can also be a financial planning tool that provides the grantor with lifetime benefits. For example, a Charitable Remainder Trust may allow the grantor an immediate charitable deduction as well as providing the grantor a lifetime income stream.

And that's not all! There are many other types of Trusts: Generation Skipping Trusts, Qualified Terminable Interest Property Trusts, Grantor Retained Annuity Trusts, Medicaid Trusts... the list goes on and on. Make an appointment with our office to find out which types of Trusts are right for your family's unique needs and goals.

Can You Guess this Legacy?

He landed a lead role on a hit TV show in the late 80s. He hosted game shows, a talk show, and produced a variety of TV shows. He wrote the theme songs for TV series like *The Facts of Life* and *Diff'rent Strokes*.

Maybe you only know him as Dr. Jason Seaver from *Growing Pains*, or possibly as the father of his famous son, Robin, a singer/songwriter.

After his son was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, he became a dedicated donor, fundraiser, and spokesperson for

the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund. He established his own organization, the Alan Thicke Center, to improve treatment and find a cure for diabetes. He was also a member of the board of Love Our Children U.S.A., an organization seeking to break the cycle of violence against children.

Alan Thicke's entertainment career was wide-ranging, but more importantly, so was his philanthropic career.

What will your legacy be?

Compliments of Litherland Law Offices

The Litherland Law Offices have been providing quality estate planning and legal services in the Greater Bay Area since 1975. Our team of qualified and experienced individuals are trained in the complex areas of estate planning, trusts, probate, trust administration, Medi-Cal, special needs planning, tax law and geriatric care management. The aim of all members of the law firm is to help you accomplish your estate planning and elder care goals and to take the mystery out of the planning process. We are members of the American Academy of Estate Planning Attorneys and the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, organizations committed to providing consumers with the information they need to make wise estate planning choices. We regularly conduct free estate planning seminars on a wide range of topics. For a current seminar schedule, call our offices at (408) 356-9200 or (831) 476-2400 or visit www.attorneyoffice.com.

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