

EXCERPTS FROM
THE *WILL* BEHIND THE WILL
Personal Considerations in Making or Revising Your Will

Paragraph 1...

It has been said that life's least answerable question is, "What is the meaning of life?" Nevertheless, it's an important question, and one that we all seek to answer.

The meaning of your life is what you will it to be. It is shaped by the way you choose to invest your moments and years, your energies and resources. By the way you touch the world around you. The way you transform and pass on everything that comes into your mind and heart and hands.

In this article, we raise some personal considerations for your reflection as you prepare to write or revise your will.

TO WHOM WILL YOU LEAVE YOUR POSSESSIONS?

One thing we know for sure: we can't take it with us! But because we know that, we can begin experiencing, even now, the once-in-a-lifetime joy of giving gifts to ...

You'll think first of those closest to you: your spouse, or perhaps a lifelong friend or companion; your children, or the children of your siblings or closest friends -- all of those who make up...

But not all of our parting gifts need be to individuals! Groups and institutions, too, play a large part in our lives.

[You may wish to replace the following paragraph with wording more specific to your institution]

Think of those that have been important to you: the schools that educated you, the health care institution that may quite literally have saved your life. Think of the religious and fraternal communities who surrounded you with friendship and sustained you through difficult times; the local symphony or museum, theatre or ballet company that enriched your life. A bequest to such an organization will enable it to serve others as it has served you.

HOW MUCH WILL YOU GIVE TO EACH?

This may seem at first to be a difficult question, partly because, as you write or revise your will, you do not know just what the total of your assets and other possessions will be at the time of your death. Don't worry too much about that. You probably know enough to place a dollar value on the most important gifts, and others can either be contingent upon the total available or else designated as shares of the residue remaining after dollar-specific gifts and estate costs are covered.

What is best for the children?

As parents, we naturally want to do "what is best" for our children, but as we all know, determining just what *is* best is not so simple! How much should we give them? (Bear in mind that if their other parent is living, your own will may represent only a portion of their eventual inheritance.)

The most treasured gifts *we* received from *our* parents were not always those of great dollar value but those that reflected *who they were*. The same will be true of the legacy we leave to our children. The gifts they value most may well be...

Should children receive equal shares?

Another delicate question! When they were small, we loved them equally--but that did not always mean treating them alike, because their needs differed. Is it any different now that they are older?

IN WHAT FORM WILL YOU GIVE IT?

This question moves us toward the more technical, tax-sensitive considerations in writing or revising your will, many of which lie beyond the scope of this article. We mention however, some of the general possibilities you may want to explore in detail with your lawyer.

Bequests to those persons for whom you wish to provide financial support may, of course, always be made in a lump sum, but depending on your goals and the circumstances, other methods may be preferable. For example...

There are plans that enable you to provide both for family and charity. For example, in your will you could create a special type of trust, sometimes referred to as...

The possibilities are as varied as family circumstances. Simply be aware that you need to consider not just the amount to give each person, but also the best way to give it.

WHO WILL MANAGE YOUR ESTATE?

If your written will is to be administered in a way that faithfully reflects your inner will, you should think carefully about whom to designate as your executor. You can choose a surviving spouse or other relative, a trusted friend or advisor, whose age and circumstances make it likely that he or she will be available to serve when needed.

FOR FURTHER HELP

We sincerely hope these thoughts and suggestions will be useful as you write or revise your will. If you are considering a bequest to **[Full Name of Charity]**, we would be pleased to confer with you and provide sample language for your bequest provision. **[Refer to booklet or other information piece if one is offered.]**