

*The Most
Important
Part of
Planning...*

When you think about planning for your child’s future, how does that make you *feel*?

When my family began planning for my younger sister, Sarah, who has Down syndrome, we experienced many emotions during our planning conversations. We felt...

Overwhelmed.
Frustrated.
Confused.
Worried.
Afraid.

And in the midst of those negative emotions, we felt **alone**—like we were the only family in the entire world who felt that way. This made us feel STUCK.

Can you relate?

My family knew we *needed* to plan. We knew that it was important for our entire family. And most importantly, we knew that Sarah’s long-term security and success depended on having a plan in place. But our emotions prevented us from making any progress toward planning.

The peace of mind that we were seeking eluded us for far too long...

Then, *somehow*, we managed to dig ourselves out of the rut that we were in and found a way to create a plan for Sarah’s future—a future that was intentionally designed to give her every opportunity to be happy and live a fulfilling life.

And we made sure to communicate our plan to everyone who would potentially be involved in Sarah’s future. Completing a special needs plan was a huge accomplishment for my family and left us feeling **free**.

For the first time ever, we experienced true **peace of mind** about the future.

When my family was planning for Sarah’s future, I was a college student. My role in our family’s planning process was directly related to my desire to positively influence my sister’s ability to succeed. I did everything I could do—as a sibling—to enable her to feel proud of and happy with her life. I was glad I could help my family plan for Sarah’s future.

Because of these experiences planning with my family, I sought a career helping other families—like mine—plan for their loved ones’ futures.

As I began working with other parents and siblings of individuals with special needs, to my surprise, I learned that my family wasn’t the only family who felt overwhelmed, frustrated, and confused trying to plan for the future. It seemed like EVERYONE experienced these negative emotions during their planning journeys.

I hated that other families were struggling, just like my family had struggled years earlier. I knew there had to be a better way to plan that didn’t leave families feeling alone and stuck.

So I developed an organization to help families efficiently achieve peace of mind about the future.

Anyway...that's just a small glimpse into my life and personal experiences to give you some perspective on where I'm coming from. I know we don't know each other that well yet, right? But let's be honest with each other...

You don't WANT to plan for the future. ... *Am I right?*

You didn't wake up this morning eager to jump into the difficult and emotional conversations that go along with future planning. You don't want to think about the future, especially because you know you have to discuss the possibility of not being here to take care of and support your child. That conversation is looming on the horizon...but it's just not one that you feel ready to have.

HOWEVER.

Even though you don't **WANT** to think about planning, you know you **NEED** a plan. People keep telling you that you should create a plan for the future. *Don't they?*

But **knowing** you need a plan and being told that you **should** plan just hasn't seemed to motivate you to actually do it—to create a Special Needs Plan for your child.

You feel **stuck** and haven't found the right catalyst to get you moving forward with your planning journey. Something about the planning process seems wrong...something feels missing from the experience.

I think I've discovered the missing link.

Remember how I told you that when my family was planning for Sarah's future, we got to a place where we just felt **STUCK** and we couldn't seem to make any progress...but then somehow, we did—we created a plan for the future we were all happy with?

That didn't just happen. We didn't just wake up one day **magically UNSTUCK**.

Looking back on my family's planning journey, our solution wasn't necessarily intentional. It was probably born out of desperation, more than anything. Like you, we knew we needed to create a plan for my sister's future, but the old approach to planning wasn't working—we weren't getting anywhere with our planning journey. We needed a different approach.

So we changed the planning conversations we were having.

Before, our planning conversations were focused on questions like:

“What happens to Sarah if mom and dad pass away?”

and

“If mom and dad aren't here to provide for her, how much money does Sarah need to live?”

If you've ever thought about these questions, you know how emotionally draining they can be. It was too scary to think about a future where mom and dad weren't around and Sarah was left on her own.

Fear of the unknown prevented us from accomplishing what we'd set out to do.

Instead of dwelling on the negatives, we shifted our limited mindset around planning to a mindset of abundance with regard to the future.

Now, our planning conversations focused on questions like:

“What can we do today that will allow Sarah to live a happy and fulfilling life?”

“How can we enable her to live a life where she can make a difference in others' lives?”

and

“How do we make sure that this happens today—AND every day in the future?”

Don't get me wrong. The previous questions we'd discussed (about planning for what would happen in the event that my parents were no longer around) were absolutely essential for our family to discuss and find solutions for (and they are for your family, too!).

But at least for my family, we weren't able to address those **big scary future** questions until we re-adjusted our purpose for planning. *Why were we creating a plan in the first place?*

Our purpose for planning had to be bigger than just knowing what to do in the event that life's worst case “What If...” scenario (my parents' premature death) happened. Because focusing on that alone was paralyzing.

When we shifted our purpose for planning to enabling my sister to live a life that made her feel purposeful and impactful using her unique and amazing abilities, we were able to move forward with our planning journey.

So how do **YOU** learn from my family's experience?

How can **YOUR** planning journey be easier than ours was?

I encourage you to use the following **three** exercises that my team and I have developed to help you discover the **MOST IMPORTANT** part of planning: your family's own unique “**WHY**”—or reason—for creating a special needs plan.

Let these exercises help you move from a limited mindset about planning only for life's “What Ifs...” to a mindset of abundance focused on planning to enable your child to live a happy and fulfilled life today—and every day in the future.

The Most Important Part of Planning: Your “WHY”

Exercise #1: What’s preventing you from planning for your child’s GREAT life?

There are many different reasons why we often fail to create plans that would help us achieve our goals and worry less about the future. Here are seven common examples:

1. We are reactive rather than proactive.
2. We are not organized.
3. We are not self-disciplined.
4. We procrastinate.
5. We don’t know how to plan effectively.
6. We think planning is a waste of time!
7. We are not patient.

What about you? What’s preventing you from creating a plan that will allow your child to live a purposeful and impactful life?

Exercise #2: When you think about Special Needs Planning, how does it make you feel?

In Columns A & B below, circle every emotion you’ve ever felt as you’ve thought about and attempted to plan for your loved one with special needs:

Column A

Interested

Curious

Enthusiastic

Happy

Optimistic

Hopeful

Column B

Sad

Worried

Disgusted

Scared

Panicked

Afraid

Excited

Anxious

Grateful

Angry

Confident

Frustrated

Joyful

Confused

Patient

Disappointed

Content

Overwhelmed

Total Column A _____

Total Column B _____

Exercise #3: What do you “want to be” for your family?

Intentions accompany all of your thoughts and behaviors. When you don’t think about your intentions often or deeply, it’s easy to become distracted and frustrated. By consciously choosing and focusing on your intentions (what you “want to be”), you’re more likely to achieve your goals. One of the best ways to stay focused on your intentions is by writing your own Intention Statement and reviewing it regularly.

Example intention statements from families we serve:

“I am a great provider for my family.”

“I can give my family, and child with special needs, every opportunity to succeed.”

“I feel confident that I’m doing everything I can do to allow my child to live a great life.”

Now—it’s your turn! What is your Intention Statement? Why are you planning? What is it that you “want to be” for your family?

Quick Tips: Write about what you want in your life—not what you don’t want. Write as if it’s already happening now—use words like “am,” “can,” and “feel,” – avoid words like “will.”

“I _____

_____.”