

Timely insights that you can use.

“You may delay, but time will not.” – Benjamin Franklin

Let’s face it. Keeping our own financial house in order is challenging enough. The senior citizens in our lives often face increasing financial challenges including living on a fixed or reduced income, dealing with healthcare costs, dealing with the illness or death of a spouse and being targeted by financial scams.

It can be difficult to start a conversation about sensitive financial topics without appearing to be controlling or nosy. However, it is much easier to start these conversations when the senior loved one is doing well, both physically and cognitively, rather than waiting until the person is ill and may not be able to help you help them.

Let’s look at some of the financial issues aging seniors may face and some strategies for assisting them.

Stay Safe from Financial Scams

Financial scams, especially those targeting senior citizens, are reaching epidemic levels. Scammers are becoming more creative in their methods, often playing on the emotions of their targets. This financial issue may be one of the easiest to have a conversation about since financial scams are frequently covered in the news. Asking those you care about, especially seniors in your life, whether they have heard about the following types of scams will help build their awareness:

Types of Scams	Tactics of the Scammer
Fake texts and emails	Scammer uses text or email claiming to be from a bank, credit card company or retailer asking for personal information (address, Social Security number, banking information) to gain access to bank accounts or steal the senior’s identity. Such texts or emails often look or sound quite real and may even use the logo of the bank.
Government Impersonation (such as the IRS, Social Security or Medicare)	Scammer calls, emails or texts claiming to be from the government telling you that you owe money for taxes or benefits and asking you to pay money. They may also ask you for personal information, such as your Social Security number or banking information.
Theft by Caregivers	Caregivers may use their relationship and access to steal from the victim. They may ask the victim for their debit card, credit card or PIN numbers for bank accounts under the cover of “helping” the victim. For example, the scammer may offer to pick up milk or bread for the victim using the victim’s debit card, when the motive of the scammer is to use the card for their own personal use.
The Grandparent Scam	The scammer impersonates the grandchild or says they are trying to help the grandchild with a fake and urgent situation, like needing bail money or money for medical expenses.
Online romances	The scammer creates fake profiles on dating sites and eventually asks for money or “a loan.”

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In addition to those mentioned above, there are many other scams including sweepstakes and lottery scams in which victims are told that they've won a large prize, but must pay taxes or fees to claim it, tech support scams in which the victims are told there's a problem with the victim's computer and need remote access or payment to fix the problem and investment scams in which victims are pressured to invest money in fake investment schemes that offer high returns and no risks.

Scammers continue to find new and creative ways to try to defraud people. How do we protect ourselves and others?

Make sure that you use every strategy available including:



- Educating yourself and others about the common types of financial scams and following the news to learn about new ones. It can be helpful to ask the senior whether they have heard about the latest financial fraud and use that conversation to educate them.
- Staying on guard for unsolicited offers by phone, email or text. Many scammers will try to create some sense of urgency and pressure to act immediately.
- Protecting all your devices -phone, tablet, laptop, etc. with security software and strong and unique passwords.
- Asking a trusted friend or family member to help you verify any situation of which you are unsure.

Update the Estate Plan

People frequently have an estate plan done when they get married or have children but then fail to revisit the plan as time goes by. It is important to review your estate plan periodically, but especially when there is a major change in one's financial or family situation, such as children reaching adulthood or the death of a spouse.

Gently asking the senior loved one whether they have an estate plan and when they reviewed it last may be a good start to offering to help them find an attorney to assist them. However, suggest that they be on guard regarding "estate planning seminars" put on by companies that offer a lunch or dinner to listen to an estate planning "pitch" and then pressure the attendee to sign a contract to have their estate plan prepared. It is also not advisable to prepare one's own documents with forms or services one can find online because such documents may lack statutory requirements for validity or may not be appropriate for the individual's situation.

Last, every competent adult should consider having a durable power of attorney for property and a power of attorney for healthcare. The durable power of attorney for property allows the individual to designate a trusted person to manage their financial affairs, including making sure bills are paid and taxes are filed, in the event of their incapacity. Having a durable power of attorney for property may prevent the need for a costly court-appointed guardianship in the event of the senior's incapacity.

The healthcare power of attorney allows a designated person to make healthcare decisions on behalf of the senior if they are unable to do so themselves. Such documents generally contain provisions to ensure that decisions align with the preferences of the senior surrounding such issues as long-term care and end-of-life care. Both the durable power of

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attorney for property and the healthcare power of attorney should give the senior peace of mind, knowing that a trusted person will take care of matters for them if they are unable to do so.

Open the Lines of Communication

It can be difficult to approach financial topics with a loved one. Framing your concerns from your perspective will avoid sounding nosy or critical. Consider conversation starters like the following:

Idea	Conversation Starter
Start with a less sensitive topic to ease into more important topics.	“Hey, I noticed that the local pharmacy delivers now,” and then transitioning into a conversation about how the senior is handling health care costs.
Express concern.	“I want to make sure that everything is in order in the event of an emergency. Can we go over your power of attorney documents?”
Offer help but not control.	“Is there anything I can help you with, like organizing your documents or setting up online banking?”
Share your own experience, and empathize about an area of concern, such as tax matters.	“It’s tax preparation time. I know I always feel a little stressed about it. How are you dealing with it this year?”
Ask whether the senior has heard about a related news story, such as a financial scam.	“Have you heard about some of the financial scams that are targeting seniors? Let’s make sure that you are protected.”
Suggest that you help with a review of an area of concern.	“Let’s review your Medicare supplement to make sure it is the right one for you.”
Suggest a meeting with a professional for unbiased advice.	“I think it would be helpful if we sat down with your attorney to take a look at your documents.”



Seek the Help of a COUNTRY Trust Bank® Financial Advisor

A CTB Financial Advisor can provide an unbiased perspective during sensitive conversations about estate planning, retirement planning and other financial topics. Emphasize how the financial advisor will focus on their needs and work with them to help provide a plan for a secure retirement. This can assist the senior with peace of mind knowing that they are getting professional help and that their financial matters are being managed with care.

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Ways to Protect Aging Loved Ones



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