

CONFIDENT CONVERSATIONS® on Retirement: Women & Money: Aligning Your Financial Strategy With Your Motivation

Francisco Negrón: Welcome to T. Rowe Price's CONFIDENT CONVERSATIONS® on Retirement. My name is Francisco Negrón and I'm grateful to be your host. For the past 35 years, I have been privileged to work with organizations to help their employees prepare for retirement. My colleagues joining me today are financial and industry professionals who also help people in their retirement journey, whether they are planning for retirement or already there.

March is Women's History Month and with women's wealth on continued upward trajectory and growing faster than ever before, empowering women investors is more important today than ever. A lot has changed for women in a relatively short amount of time. In today's episode, we will talk about some of these changes and why it's becoming increasingly important for women to take on an active role in shaping their finances, both now and down the road.

So, for this episode, we have four generations present with our representative Baby Boomer, Judith Ward.

Judy Ward: Great to be here, Francisco.

Francisco Negrón: Our Gen Xer, Emily Barczak.

Emily Barczak: Thrilled to be here today.

Francisco Negrón: Our Millennial, Sam Smith.

Sam Smith: Hi, It's a pleasure.

Francisco Negrón: And last but not least, our Gen Z. Sarah Oliver.

Sarah Oliver: Hi, happy to be here.

Francisco Negrón: And they're here to share their unique perspectives at the different stages in their lives.

Let's start with Emily Barczak, who is vice president and insights leader at T. Rowe Price and here today representing Gen X. Emily, welcome to the show. Thank you for joining us. Would you share some of your background with our listeners? For instance, what inspired you to focus your work on empowering women in finance and investing?

Emily Barczak: Thank you, Francisco. really psyched to be here. So, a bit about me and my background. So, my academic background is psychology, psychology, psychology. So, my

undergrad, my Masters are both in psychology and I pursued that academic endeavor because I was told to study the things that you love learning about. And for me, that was people and understanding people. And I also knew that I never wanted to be a therapist. And so how that was going to shake out with a career path, I was a little uncertain of.

But what I can say is, like many people, many women, I have not had a linear path. I've worked in insurance, health care and now asset management and been able to marry my academic interests and accomplishments and the social sciences with the application and how we can use it to our advantage in the corporate and professional setting. And that really, for me, as I've gotten older and more tenured, has really emerged with clarity that that is what I love and kind of my domain.

From a personal standpoint, I would say that this topic of women and investing and women and finance resonates with me and touches my heart because I am keenly aware that my upbringing was pretty unique in that the women in my family were very savvy and successful investors. My mom did work in banking. My grandmother was a small business owner, but both of them were very savvy with money. And, you know, they absolutely were deliberate in imparting wisdom. I can still hear my grandmother's voice. She's 95, lives on a farm by herself, by the way, still with us. Very grateful about that. But I can remember when I was 18, her hounding me about opening my IRA. And at 18 I didn't want to talk retirement. I was, you know, more focused on where I was going freshman year. But, you know, when we know about the compounding confounding effects of investing and savings, in hindsight, what an incredible gift that was that I had that voice in my life encouraging me to save for retirement at a very young age.

So, I do feel an obligation not only to my daughter and my son, frankly, but also to others, to really empower and help increase confidence in women's ability to reach their financial goals and increase their financial acumen.

Francisco Negrón: Hmm. That's wonderful. Thank you for sharing that. It's your work, it's almost a way of honoring the example they set for you. Maybe we should have your grandmother at a future episode.

Emily Barczak: Watch out.

[ALL LAUGH]

Francisco Negrón: Well, thank you for sharing that. I know that you run workshops to help educate and empower women with their finances or investing. So, can you tell us more about the history of women's financial empowerment?

Emily Barczak: Yeah. So, I do think a bit of context setting is really important with this topic to kind of look at where we came from, where we are and where we're going as a community of women, as a community of women investors. And so, if you look at the 1920s, right, the 1920s marked a time when women in the United States were able to vote. Most women, not all. Let

me say that that very much applied to white women and not women of color in this country. But that was definitely a turning point in terms of women's presence, not only on the political scene, but in other realms in this country, their presence being validated and recognized.

And then you look at like the 1950s at that point, you know, there's maybe a third of women that were in the workforce at that period of history. Shifting to the mid-1970s. That's when you saw the Equal Credit Opportunity Act pass. And really, that was a moment where women, in the mid-seventies, had for the first-time access to lending and banking, which they didn't have access to before unless a husband was present. So putting this in my own personal context, I mean, I remember my mother telling me that and she happened to be the breadwinner as my father was getting his business up and running, that though she was the one that had the stable career and stable income, she could not purchase their first house together without him there or a car or even get a credit card. And so, you know, that wasn't that long ago. So, I think that it's really important to just remember those moments in our history and in our culture because, as you would assume, they very much influence our behavior, our attitudes, our mindset around money, and also our knowledge base and familiarity and comfort level. You know, so I think that that historical context is really important to emphasize.

Francisco Negrón: Very much so. Very much so. Thank you for that perspective and for the history lesson. I mean, that was that was a very interesting and important reminder, just the fact that all the work that all of you do and we're going to get to the rest of you in a minute, but just how it is on that foundation that this is all built upon.

Emily Barczak: And if I could interrupt, there's one key thing that I need to mention.

Francisco Negrón: Please do.

Emily Barczak: So that was sort of the historical and past. Where we are now is that women are controlling more personal wealth than men than ever before in our history. And the projections are such that by 2030, women will control upwards of \$30 trillion. And that is a figure that I emphasize a lot in my work with financial professionals, 30 trillion by 2030. And just to sort of double down on where things are and where things are going. 80% of women at some point in their lives will be the sole decision maker when it comes to all things money and finance in their household. Eight out of ten women.

Francisco Negrón: No, very important. Thank you for adding that that point of clarification. It really underscores why equipping and educating women like you do in your workshops is so very important. Thank you. Now I'd like to introduce CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ Professional and the baby boomer in the room, Judith Ward. Judy, welcome to the show. It's great to have you. Now, I have been fortunate to know you and work with you for many, many years. But for our listeners, would you please share some of your background?

Judy Ward: Sure. Thanks for having me. It's so great to be here. As you said, Francisco, I have been with T. Rowe Price for many years. I am a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional,

CFP. But my primary role is really educating investors on personal finance and retirement savings and planning.

My journey is a little different in that I actually started at T. Rowe Price, and I did not have a college degree. And the reason that I started working with T. Rowe Price is because they had a tuition assistance program. So, I worked full time, went to college at night to finish up and get my degree. And I really didn't know anything about the industry, but I learned so much at T. Rowe Price that I ended up changing my major from communications to economics and finance and have just really learned to love what I do.

I learned so much at T. Rowe Price and now feel like I need to give that back to investors along retirement savings and personal finance and also the ability to use my platform to help educate women, especially.

Francisco Negrón: And I've been fortunate, I've seen you do that and impact so many others, women, men, I mean, just across the board. Thank you for that. So, building on that, given your vast experience in this field, I'm curious, when you talk to women about financial empowerment, what are some of your core messages to them?

Judy Ward: Well, one of the things that really opened my eyes about women in finance is actually my own personal experience. My mom and my mother-in-law were both widowed in their sixties. Now, my mom had worked outside of the home. My mother-in-law had never worked outside of the home. So, they kind of had the same circumstances, but their situations were much different. My mom struggled financially. She was not expecting that her Social Security benefit, for example, was cut almost in half. She was not expecting that, and she was widowed for like ten years. My mother-in-law, on the other hand, my father-in-law had set them up pretty well financially for retirement, but she had never had anything to do with the finances. She couldn't even write a check. I mean, not that we write checks anymore, but she knew nothing about the finances.

And so, you know, seeing both of their experiences, really opened my eyes to like, wow, we need to, we need to help women understand. You know, generally they live longer than men. At some point, they are most likely going to be solo. So, they need to have an understanding of the household finances and how the household is tracking toward key financial goals. I often say that women don't have to be investment gurus, but they do need to know the financial plan. More often than not, they're going to be financially, like I said, solo at some point in their life, their choice or not. And it's better to be prepared than surprised.

One of the things we did is we conducted research to understand women's roles in household finances and found that women often identify with three main household financial roles. There's the primary decision maker where they want to do it all, and they're very confident in their abilities. There's the shared decision maker where they want to with their partner, make all the financial decisions together. They're pretty confident in their financial know how. They like to again evaluate all major financial decisions and kind of come up with an equal

agreement. They're looking for empowerment. The primary decision maker is looking for kind of independence. And then there's a delegator. The person who delegates the decision making. So, they play an integral role in their household. They want to be aware of major financial decisions however, they're not overly confident when it comes to finances. Limited involvement in investment decisions, and is really looking for the security for their family.

Francisco Negrón: So, they're still interested, I mean, very invested. But...

Judy Ward: Yes.

Francisco Negrón: ...the ability to actually the tactical aspects of it, they need to delegate that.

Judy Ward: Exactly. So, I mean, these roles may seem obvious, but it's important to understand where you might see yourself on this continuum and why. What drives your level of involvement if you're the primary decision maker, for example? Who else needs to know about these financial goals should something happen to you? If you delegate decision making, what if some life event forces you to become more involved? And if working with a financial professional, what kind of partnership can keep you informed, engaged, but not overwhelmed at the same time?

Francisco Negrón: Thank you for that. It really gives us a clear idea of the financial decision-making roles that women do play in their households, the motivations behind them, but something that I'm also picking up, also the fact that circumstances may require you to take on a different role and the need to be prepared for that because it could be anticipated or unexpected. Right. Well, thank you. Thank you for that. Very helpful. So, let's come back to you, Emily. What are some of the unique challenges that women of your Gen-X generation face today?

Emily Barczak: Sure, I'm happy to answer that. And I, you know, I have to be totally honest with, like the generational labels in that, you know, I think that the gaps that I may list in just a moment are other people will identify with.

Francisco Negrón: Right.

Emily Barczak: So, I do not mean to answer this question and be exclusive and this only applies to people in my generation. I just wanted to say that.

Francisco Negrón: Yeah no, that's important. Thank you for that. I was thinking about this. I mean, this is not intended as labels that are hard and fast and you need to fit into one.

Emily Barczak: Yeah, yeah.

Francisco Negrón: But just as a way of thinking about it and going from there. Thank you for that clarification.

Emily Barczak: Yeah, and I think it's just helpful to see that and validate the experience of us all, right? It's so unique and individual, but, you know, some consistent threads around some of the challenges. You know, pay gap is definitely one of them. And when I put that one out there, you know, I think about, you know, the Nobel Laureate for Economics last year was a woman, and her body of work was all around equity and equality with pay. Some really interesting findings. And I would encourage anybody to dig into that a little bit more, especially if you're interested in kind of understanding the complexity of the pay gap. But that is definitely one of the challenges.

From a personal standpoint, what I can say is, you know, I was in the workforce full time, had children, wanted to be that primary caregiver. My husband was, like many couples, we just decided who's going to run with career right now and who's going to be sort of in charge of household and kids. I raised my hand to household and kids and worked part time, and my husband ran with career. That worked well for us. I think that fits a very traditional mold.

But I do think, you know, pay gap is an issue for me because, you know, there was some choices, through those choices. Right? There were, I wouldn't say sacrifices, but there were some results that led to pay gap.

Sam Smith: I think even more recent recently we saw in 2020, women left the workforce in much higher numbers to take care of the kids at home. During that period of time, whenever everything was closed down, work, schools. There were studies about how many men and women were actually leaving the workforce, and it was women significantly higher, taking that burden on themselves, leaving the workforce to do what had to be done.

Francisco Negrón: Mm hmm.

Emily Barczak: Yeah.

Sam Smith: So, it's not just maternity leave in those early years. It's, you know, throughout their 18 plus.

Emily Barczak: Yeah, that's a fantastic point, Sam. So, I think, you know, that ties into parental bonding, maternity, childcare, rising costs of childcare and some of the decisions that have to be made just from a practical standpoint around that. And then caregiving. And you know, what I can say for me at this stage of my life is caregiving. Ten years ago, was all about my children. Caregiving now, as I mentioned grandmama. You know, I don't do hands on day-to-day caregiving of my grandmother, but she is 95. I also lost my father to cancer last year. I actually lost my father and stepfather within nine months of each other. And so, showing up for my mother and relatives, navigating through some of just, quite frankly, the facts of life that happen is a newer demand and challenge for me as you know, I'm making my way through the forties.

Francisco Negrón: No, that's an important one and I appreciate the distinction. Caregiving, because it does become, it does become something that many of us in this generation, just

simple aging in the years. I mean, that we have to face. So, it's very much something that we have to plan for. Thank you for that. So (remove pause) I'd like to introduce our Millennial CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional and Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor Sam Smith. So good to see you, Sam. It's been a while. Welcome to the show. Would you please, just to begin, would you please share some of your background with our listeners?

Sam Smith: Yes. Pleasure to be here. So, I've been with T. Rowe Price for coming on my 15th year in our Retirement Plan services side, which works with workplace retirement plans. And my job is to educate them on retirement savings, financial wellness, and a fun niche in part of that is we do help women as well, so we have a focus on women in financial wellness and women in retirement.

And personally, what brought me to the passion of educating women is I was raised by a single mother who did all of the finances, everything, sometimes paycheck to paycheck. But she was very determined to make sure her kids had a better life than she did. And bringing that and making sure, especially as a woman myself, knowing that, hey, I can do it myself. You can fix the sink. You go in and you don't need to call someone or need someone to help you with that. You can do it. And you know, taking that and doing my best to pass that along to other women, letting them know that they can be empowered, they can be strong to do it themselves. And take it and run. And doing my best to make sure that they have the tools that they can do that.

Francisco Negrón: Mm hmm. What a wonderful example. I love stories like that. Thank you for sharing that. So given your background, how can women work with their financial professional to fund what's important to them in their current financial priorities?

Sam Smith: I think a good way to start and focus on what brings you either the most energy or the most stress, potentially both when looking at your finances. Handling what's bringing you the most stress can hopefully calm some of that a little bit. And focusing on what brings you joy, it makes it a little bit easier. So, let's be honest, when you have that picture in your mind, you're like, okay, I can skip that coffee run this morning so I can make this a reality. But, depending on your age and your life stage, your priority buckets could include short term liquidity. So, what do you have to pay for now? Looking at the budgets. Some longer term goals. So that could be retirement or college savings and establishing your legacy. So that's known as the three L's. There's endless number of scenarios or ways to be involved in the financial preparation process. Especially depending on, like Judy said, how you want to be involved. It all depends on your unique situation, and it could change.

Recently, for me, I was always the sole decision maker. I got married a little bit later in life to another financial professional. So, switching from sole decision making to joint decision making, on the other hand, was a little bit interesting to say the least.

Francisco Negrón: Finances are pristine and perfect, and everything is in order.

Sam Smith: I don't know about that.

Francisco Negrón: Hardly, right?

Sam Smith: But, you know, it's funny to see how the different goals between my husband and I, what we think is a little bit more of the priority. The joke is there's always one person in the household that wants to spend all the money to have fun now and the other person that keeps you out of the poorhouse. That's definitely there but

Francisco Negrón: You're sharing that energy. And what was it? Stress.

[ALL LAUGH]

Sam Smith: We share the energy and stress. I think the one thing that we solely agree on is starting that education fund for our daughter as soon as she was born. She was born last year. So, it definitely changes those priorities a lot. And what brings you stress changes, what brings you joy changes, and then what those real goals are in that short term.

Like Emily said, childcare costs are extravagant, to say the least. Depending on where you live, that could be \$20,000 or more to pay for childcare each year. You have your longer-term goals. So really still trying to retire ourselves, still looking at that horizon and the legacy for our daughter, both in educating in some of the stuff that we talk about today, but making sure that she's set up financially as well.

Francisco Negrón: Mm hmm. Wonderful. And congratulations.

Sam Smith: Thank you.

Francisco Negrón: On your baby daughter. So, you touched on it and others have at least to me, there's a theme across this conversation that is the importance of not only being equipped to make the most of your current situation, but to plan or be prepared for how that could change. All of you have seemed to touch on that in one way or another, whether expectedly or unexpectedly. Thank you.

So, let's continue to learn about the different generations by taking a closer look at what may be most important to each of them, starting with Gen Z. And to do that, I am delighted to welcome to the show Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor Sarah Oliver. It's great to have you, Sarah. Welcome to the show. Would you please share some of your background with our listeners?

Sarah Oliver: Sure. It's great to be here. Thank you for having me. I work with Sam on the education team here at T. Rowe Price. We handle doing education for our 401(k) participants. My academic background is I have my undergrad in economics. I'm currently studying for the CFP exam. I'm really passionate about helping other women.

A little bit about my background is growing up, I didn't necessarily have the female influence in my life growing up and something I've done in my academic career and now my professional

career is seeking out women mentorship. It's been so essential to me to help me grow. And now I'm at the stage where I want to help my friends who might not have the same educational background in finance that I have had the opportunity to get. One story is my friend in college, she just told me that she thought 401(k)s were a scam. She saw a video on one of those social media platforms that 401(k)s were a trap for your money, they locked your money out and she didn't utilize it. And for me, it was so essential to speak to her and have that conversation breaking down what it was, and she ended up enrolling in her 401(k), but that's just one example.

There's now so much information out there and misinformation that I think women don't have as much experience or education knowing to believe what's right or what's not.

Francisco Negrón: Definitely, there's so much misinformation. I get to work with you regularly, and I know that you're very passionate about what you do and you're very driven. So, I'm sure that your friend is now on a very different path after having gotten the explanation from you. Thank you for that. So as a woman of Gen Z, what are some of your generation's financial priorities?

Sarah Oliver: So, women of Gen Z as a whole, they're saving less and they're making less money overall. Student loan debt has been steadily increasing. Education prices are rising higher than the inflation rate, and it's caused a lot of issue with the younger generation starting to save for retirement. It's a hurdle.

Francisco Negrón: Just seem so far away.

Sarah Oliver: Exactly. They think I'll be fine. I'll be fine. Life expectancies are increasing as are length of retirement, meaning they're going to need more money to last you through retirement. You don't want to be working when you're 80 or 90 years old. It's not ideal. And when you are earlier in your career and/or your financial journey, you're often focused on liquidity. It's an issue we see with the younger generation. Again, they don't want anything that's going to lock their money up. So, they're focused more on just having stuff they can easily access. And then creating a budget, reducing debt, and starting an emergency fund can be great places for the younger generation to start.

Francisco Negrón: No, thank you for that. I mean, listening to you clearly Gen Z has some unique challenges to face, from the list that you just went through. But also, Gen Z has the opportunity to lay a strong foundation to build upon which, you know, there are many others that didn't have that and have to fight that throughout their career. So, thank you for that perspective. Really, really important.

So, what about millennials, Sam? What are some of your generation's financial priorities?

Sam Smith: I think, as Emily said earlier, a lot of these key ideas can be spread across multiple generations. You know, everything that Sarah said, but here we're seeing a lot of change. So,

you can see a lot of marriages, divorces, so that first step and changing who's going to be the sole person in charge of financing. So going back and forth on those decision making, caring for children, potentially starting to care for parents. As we were all coming in, I think we made the joke about switching from, you know, your parents always asking you where you are to check in to then checking in with your parents, like call me when you get there and then...

Francisco Negrón: Right, right.

Sam Smith: ...Of course, you know, looking at those short term, long term, and legacy, those three L's. So, saving for retirement. I'm also trying to save for children's education. Like Sarah said, it's expensive. It's going up higher than many costs that you have as well as childcare itself. And so, there's a lot of split priorities. So that's where actually focusing on what are those joys? What are those stresses? Trying to narrow it down and then expanding your financial look from there.

Francisco Negrón: So true. Thank you. Thank you for that. What about you, Emily? What are some of the more common financial priorities you see for Gen Xers?

Emily Barczak: So, what I can say is right now I'm in the highest spending years. I have an 18-year-old senior in high school, so college is looming. And then she's got a younger brother right on her heels. And so, you know, having conversations with our financial advisor about the overlap in those college years and tuition, you know, it's just the money goes out the door very quickly.

And I will also say that given that and then in my career and work, that takes up a lot of, and I'm very grateful and I love what I do, takes up a lot of time and space and so decision fatigue is alive and well and thriving at times more than I'd like it to in the Barczak household. And so, for me, you know, enlisting the expertise and the help. I had a colleague and friend that used a metaphor of, you know, just your plate is really full and there are things that are sort of falling off. And so, I have found it really helpful to enlist the help of a financial advisor to take some of those things off of my plate.

What I'll say is that now I'm finding myself in decision making conversations, like with my mother and playing, you know, a role in her life with her finances to help her navigate through some things and so as things are coming off my plate, different things are being added on. You know, so for me, it's all of the three L's: the legacy, the longevity, the liquidity are alive and well. And how do I make sure that I'm not dropping balls that don't bounce?

Francisco Negrón: Right. That is like I like the way you put that. There's a whole lot of energy and stress and in the Barczak household as well is what I'm also getting. And actually, you mentioned how helpful it can be to have a financial professional and expert to come along with you. That's something that I that I know we've talked about in prior episodes. So, I would encourage our listeners to check that out. Sam, any thoughts?

Sam Smith: Yeah, I think it's important as you get older, as you progress and build your career, your life, you tend to shift your focus a lot and going from those short term to those long-term goals. So maybe you need to make adjustments to your lifestyle you're planning to account for that, especially if marriage, divorce, early widowhood could become your reality, especially women. We often outlive the men. We have a lot more women becoming business owners. So how can you monetize your business into money that could help you fund your retirement, creating that succession plan, and as Emily said, where you can get help, do. We're raised to think that we can do it all. And sometimes we try and knowing that there's help out there to help take some of that off of your plate so you can focus on what matters the most.

Emily Barczak: I would just love to add.

Francisco Negrón: Sure.

Emily Barczak: So, here's like, I think an important point to pause, because I think that, you know, what the research has shown is that women are controlling more in personal wealth than ever before. We said that earlier. Their confidence is not on par with the dollars that they're controlling and specifically confidence in areas around selecting a financial professional if they choose to enlist the services and expertise of one. And so, if anyone's listening and thinking, well, I don't have enough or I'm not at a stage where I feel like I'm warranted to have a financial advisor or professional, I just want you to quiet that. Like, you have enough and you absolutely there is someone with the expertise and the skill set to help you.

Francisco Negrón: Right.

Emily Barczak: It's not about having a certain amount of assets or dollars. If you feel like you would really benefit from that expertise, reach out to someone. You have enough.

Francisco Negrón: Yeah, if you have responsibility. If you play a role...

Emily Barczak: Yeah.

Francisco Negrón: ...in some way, big or small.

Sam Smith: And it could be as easy as reaching out to your workplace's 401(k) plan, right?

Emily Barczak: Absolutely.

Sam Smith: Sometimes that's the first and potentially the only type of...

Francisco Negrón: Great place to start.

Sam Smith: ...introduction to finances a lot of workers have. And so that can be a great place to start. And at least get some of your initial questions answered and then go from there.

Francisco Negrón: Excellent. Thank you both for those points. So, Judy, what about financial priorities for pre-retirees? And actually, can you also talk about of retirees, given your planning experience?

Judy Ward: Sure. So many baby boomers are already retired and some of the younger baby boomers are on the cusp of retirement. So, I'm actually starting that transition to retirement and it's difficult to think of, after focusing on saving money over decades, that now I'm in need to spend that money down over decades. It's a real mind shift.

Francisco Negrón: Not all at once.

[ALL LAUGH]

Judy Ward: So, establishing a retirement income strategy at the same time trying to minimize taxes, estate preparation is very key. And so, it can make things seem complex. You know, one example is baby boomer women is the decision of when to take Social Security benefits. I mean, that really needs to be thought of. If you're married with a spouse and that strategy can be really important. Another is tax efficient drawdown strategies.

And then the closer you get to retirement and even in retirement, the legacy becomes a priority. Simple things like having a record of all your financial accounts, including account paperwork, your estate documents in a place where your heirs know where to find it, and not just your heirs, but a surviving spouse, is important too. And then I'm actually, you know, I've been sharing this information with my adult children and, you know, every time I see them, I'm like, okay, if something happens to me, this is where you go. This is who you talk to. So, I kind of have a packet of everything, you know, and we do a little at a time. I tell them about, you know, what's going to happen if something should happen to me, financially for them. Where to find things. But they know where to go to find the information. So that's a tremendous gift to your loved ones. And then, you know, review these every year things change and discussing with family your wishes for your care as you age and having that advanced directive and durable health care power of attorney to help ensure that your wishes are followed.

Sam Smith: I would add in that and having all of your kids know where your accounts are, to also make sure you get your beneficiaries up to date. I think that's important at any age because you never know what to expect. But in my work, I've seen a lot of unclaimed accounts after death because my guess is the heirs and beneficiaries just don't know where to look to find it, to know these accounts are out there, but also making sure the right people are getting the accounts. So having those beneficiaries up to date should anything change.

Judy Ward: That's a great point, Sam. And also, if there has been, you know, a life event to make sure that you follow up and, you know, change the account as needed. Double check the beneficiary designation. And again, we've talked about working with a financial professional. That's someone that can help you through these often-difficult times.

You know, some other considerations is health care. If you're looking at retiring and you're not 65 years old yet, that's when, you know, Medicare eligibility is generally at age 65. So, there might be a gap there that you have to look for health coverage if that's something that is important to you, prior to age 65.

Francisco Negrón: Yeah, it can be overwhelming, which is the reason why people put it off. It's not that important until it's all that matters. So great suggestions. Thank you for that, Judy. So, Emily, once someone has identified their financial priorities, what are the next steps in your opinion?

Emily Barczak: So, I think beyond the financial priorities, which I would an easy way that I remember how to bucket priorities is now soon and later. We've talked we've talked about the three L's. But another way, maybe a little simpler is just what you know, what's imperative now, soon and later, and having, you know, identifying a few things in those buckets that are priorities or goals. I think, you know, really running parallel with that is understanding of yourself.

And we've talked a little bit about this, you know, in terms of family and upbringing, historical context, you know, just knowing yourself in your behaviors around money is really important because there are behaviors that will enable the goals, reaching the goals, and there are behaviors that will present obstacles. So really being honest with yourself, if you're you know, if you're in that shared decision making role, being honest with your partner, with your spouse around what some of those mindsets and behaviors are, are really important to make sure that you are creating and sustaining the momentum to reach things as opposed to sort of getting in your own way. Through that

There's also really rich information that if you do enlist the help of a financial professional, you can go to those conversations very much armed with here are the priorities and here are sort of the values and behaviors that come around money and finance and investing and have a very honest conversation with your financial professional. That really will help improve the success and the outcomes. You know, financial professionals and advisors are really meant to be the subject matter expertise of financial planning, etc. They're not necessarily the experts of you, especially if you're new to them and they're new to you. You know, so really bringing knowledge about yourself to those conversations can make those 45-minute, one-hour meetings very fruitful and beneficial and impactful.

You know, so those are those are a couple of things that I would highlight in terms of what's next and what do you do. It's, you know, creating the path forward and a plan that very much could include enlisting the expertise of a financial advisor or professional.

Francisco Negrón: Yeah, absolutely. Great points, excellent suggestions. Thank you. Sam, what should listeners taking to consideration if they want to stretch their role and learn more?

Sam Smith: I think it's important to be intentional about getting involved at the level that's right for you, where you feel comfortable, but the key is to just get involved. Keep in mind that situations can change, and you should be ready for that. From UBS data that that we have, we know that 59% of widows and divorcees wish that they had been more involved in the long-term financial decisions, going in from a place where they weren't too involved to having to be that sole person in charge of finances.

We also see that women typically, on average live five years longer than men. I think, Emily, you shared earlier that eight out of ten women will be solely responsible for all of their financial decisions at some point in their lives. So that's a lot of primary decision making there. And you think you get through all of that. But we do see 33% of women aged 65 and older, so in retirement, are widowed within the first 5 to 10 years of their retirement. We're also seeing the highest level of divorces in that 65 plus range as well. So, you may find yourselves in the driver's seat of your household's finances sooner than you might have planned.

Emily Barczak: I would just layer in a couple of percentages related to what you just said, Sam. So, women going through divorce, 95% of women and this is industry wide research, 95% of women do not seek the consult or the help of a financial professional. 95% of women going through a divorce, full stop.

Sam Smith: That's a scary statistic. Yeah.

Francisco Negrón: Why is that? I mean, if you, does the research...

Sam Smith: I think that goes to what Emily said is they don't feel entitled to that that help.

Francisco Negrón: They just don't think they qualify, whatever that means, that they.

Sam Smith: Have the education behind to see the necessity of getting that financial help.

Emily Barczak: I think, you know, how much is this going to cost? Could be a potential barrier of entry to that.

Francisco Negrón: Important point.

Emily Barczak: I also think like decision fatigue, like I have got too much going on. How could I possibly fit that in? The other the other percentage that I was going to mention, in addition to that, 95% around divorce is 70% of women that are newly widowed leave the existing financial advisor.

And what we see with that research and that fact is that many of the women that are widowed, did not have a relationship with the financial advisor. So, a lot of my work is really geared towards sort of helping advisors evolve their practice and their efforts with really engaging, being more deliberate about and better at engaging women investors. But with those two major

life events we're seeing, you know, some retention issues or just not potentially getting very beneficial help at a highly stressful time of life.

Francisco Negrón: Right. Right. Thank you. Very interesting statistics, very sobering too. Thank you for that. To prepare, then, what are some resources, perhaps books, websites or organizations that you would recommend to women looking to enhance their knowledge about investing as a starting point?

Sarah Oliver: Yeah, that's something that all women should at least be attempting to start educating themselves. Like Sam, mentioned a great place to start is with your workplace employer resources. You know, for example, Sam and I, we both have gone out and done webinars or meetings about financial resources in your 401(k) in particular.

Other options, you could seek out licensed professionals. You can go to your local library. You can search online and listen to podcasts. One thing I want to mention, especially to the younger population, as we're seeing a lot of resources pop up on the Internet, a lot of people putting out content I would make sure that, do they have the qualifications to speak to you about this topic? What's the reason for speaking to you? Are they trying to sell you something or is their goal to put out educational content? And lastly, when they talk about this educational content, I would look up other sources, make sure other people in this industry are supporting those ideas. And it's not just someone trying to sell you, you know, something to buy into.

And then women tend to repeat gender roles they saw growing up. As you begin taking a more active role in your finances, you can set an example of financial partnership for the younger generation and even become a mentor to them on finance. I know for me personally, having a woman mentor in finance has really helped me in my academic career and like I said, my professional career. At T. Rowe Price we have a money mentorship program with a series of financial educational lessons, essentially spending an hour a month with a young person teaching them about finances.

Francisco Negrón: Great suggestions. Thank you for that, Sarah. Very helpful. Well, it's time for us to start wrapping up the discussion. So, let's leave our listeners with a parting thought or perhaps the next step that they can take to empower women to fund and find their why. Would any of you like to share some brief takeaways?

Sarah Oliver: Yeah, I would say, particularly for the younger generation, seek out help, whether that be in your family, outside of your family, meeting with a financial professional. You know, there's this theme of women feeling like they can't seek out a financial professional or they don't qualify. That is not the case and feel free to ask for help in the financial acumen. And honestly, just get started. We have compound interest on our side as the younger generation. So just getting started, opening an account and starting investing at a young age.

Francisco Negrón: Thank you. Sam?

Sam Smith: I would say keep an eye. Just like you do a health checkup once a year, at the very least, do a financial checkup once a year as well. So, if that's the minimal amount that you're involved. Of course, if there's more regular steps, that's great. But it can always be helpful to get just little refreshers on what's new, what's happening and what's going on in the world of finance.

Francisco Negrón: Thank you. Emily?

Emily Barczak: I would say be optimistic. You know, like there are some sobering statistics that are out there. And I, you know, just those are the facts of life, right? And those are things that are good to know and be aware of. And, you know, it's really exciting to think about women controlling more personal dollars and finance than they ever have in the U.S. And I just would want listeners to leave with a new understanding and some real optimism and also own your story, own your situation, and don't let your fear or the fact that maybe it isn't where you want it to be, hinder you from, you know, seeking out some expertise and some help. But remain very positive and optimistic about where you are and where things are with women in finance and money in this country.

Francisco Negrón: Thank you. Judy?

Judy Ward: Well, we find that couples tend to divide and conquer. You know, we've talked about this ourselves here. You know when it comes to running the household and the finances because it's efficient. But even if one partner handles the day-to-day finances and the other may be more responsible for the longer-term investments, it's so important to come together and have shared goals and understand how the household is tracking to those goals.

And especially for women in case something happens to their spouse or the marriage. Another thing I'd like to talk about that we didn't really get to today was this idea of having money on the side. You know, we call it an emergency reserve, the safety net, this money on the side. So, for women, it provides the ability to have some flexibility and some freedom should you want to make changes in your life. So, I think that's something really important for women to consider as well.

Sam Smith: And I would say for women, pass it on. Pass it on to the younger generations as you learn something, as find something helpful, uplift other women around you. So, coworkers, family, sisters, friends, daughters. Share, talk. That's the only way that we can help build some of these things and change the statistics to the positive and kind of turn it around for women and as a whole.

Francisco Negrón: A great way to end our discussion. Thank you. Thank you. You've dropped a whole lot of wisdom here on our listeners today. This has been a terrific conversation. Thank you.

Sarah Oliver: Thank you.

Emily Barczak and Judy Ward: Thank you.

Sam Smith: Thanks.

Francisco Negrón: Well, as we conclude today's episode, we hope to have inspired and empowered women to embark on their journey of finding and funding what's meaningful to them at various stages in life. It is important to remember it is never too late with determination, careful planning, financial empowerment and a strong support network, you can achieve extraordinary things.

Again, I'm Francisco Negrón. Thank you for listening. Please tune in for our next episode, which focuses on developing personal strategies to manage your income in retirement. If you like this podcast, please rate us and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. And remember, it's not how you start, but how you finish. So be confident! Your tomorrow begins today.



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