

5 TIPS TO DIVIDING YOUR FAMILY ESTATE PEACEFULLY



FAIR SPLIT
DIVIDE THINGS, NOT FAMILIES

- 1. Remember everyone processes grief differently**, and peoples' attachment to the value (emotional value) of things isn't always a reflection of caring more or less about the lost loved one. Some people really want, or must have things they can touch, see, smell... that help them remember a person by. Others may find those reminders hurt or interfere with how they want to, or can imagine moving forward. *Don't judge if it looks different than how you are feeling.*
- 2. Some people want to get through things quickly to get to the other side, and some want to take their time and may feel rushing somehow dishonors the lost loved one.** Both feelings can feel very legitimate. And what I would put forth here is that, they are both very legitimate and both approaches should be honored if possible, or at least acknowledged and empathized with. *In any case, try to avoid judging.*
- 3. Some heirs may want to have their spouses or their children helping them choose what they select.** Of course, if they want input into what is wanted that makes sense, but for nearly all families, I highly recommend that ONLY the heir / siblings be present for any division process or in person selections. This is not just my experience but is found in nearly any book or guide on dividing. *Sibling rivalries or tensions are hard enough to deal with in the face of loss; added personalities and people perceived as "outside the direct family" participating choices can create tensions and conflict easily avoided by keeping it to only the heirs.*
- 4. Some heirs when face to face, may alter their own selections based on whether they think another heir is interested in the item or not.** I would suggest that ANY altering of a truly preferred choice, based on perceived desires of another sibling is a recipe for conflict. Of course, siblings with any rivalry may select an item as a "take away" from the other, actually then causing them to miss choosing something they truly wanted (so a double loss), and fanning the fires of conflict between those two. But what about the "pleaser sibling", that always wants to keep everyone else happy? If he or she "passes on taking an item they want" so that another sibling can take it, it could be OK, but what if two years later they visit the sibling who did get it and see it gathering dust in the garage? *Now the pleaser may very well resent that they didn't take it and feel anger toward the sibling they "let have it", even though that sibling didn't know or want them to acquiesce like that.*
- 5. Things usually aren't worth what you think, dollar value wise.** The market the past ten years has greatly devalued antique, beautiful furniture, china, silver, collectibles, etc. This is in part due to so much on the market as people live longer, the vast accumulations of the 80s, and the changing tastes of next generations toward more simple or functional furniture and even smaller houses. Most "antiques" sell now as just old brown furniture. What an item was bought for, also has little to do with what it can sell for now. Appraisals for insurance purposes reflect values typically only gotten if there is a fire or they are stolen. Trying to actually sell things for those values may easily yield half or less. *Even when appraisals or fair market values are provided as "estate sale" estimates, what the estate would have to pay to an estate sales company or consignment gallery etc. means discounting those values by half is more realistic, as it reflects the "cost of selling". That net expected value is the fairer way for the family to reconcile any value difference between who got what. Why should family members be charged or receive more from the heirs than the estate could net if everything was just sold.*