



# The Hidden Key to Legacy Wealth

## *How Advisors can Strengthen the Couples Relationships that Shape Generational Well-being*

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In legacy families, couples are the relational heart around which everything else revolves, yet the dynamics of intimate partnerships remain one of the most overlooked drivers of family well-being and sustainability. This article explores how advisors can strengthen the couples at the heart of these families in specific ways, such as: supporting relational skill-building, guiding values-based prenuptial conversations, and fostering courageous dialogue on the issues that matter most. Drawing on practical tools, lived experience, and systemic insight, it offers a roadmap for professionals seeking to serve not just the financial architecture of a family, but the human relationships that give it meaning and durability.

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*The call came at 10 p.m. A disagreement over a philanthropic investment had spiraled into a full-blown crisis. The couple at the helm of a well respected charity, visionary leaders in their family and community, were unraveling. Although they were arguing over something that was said at their last board meeting, the real issue was a long-neglected marriage, cracking under pressure.*

**A**t The Lovins Group, we often find ourselves on calls like this one. After years of working with legacy families, we've come to believe that strong couple relationships are not only the emotional heart of enterprising families, they are also a strategic imperative for generational family flourishing. And yet, couples rarely receive the kind of support they need to navigate the profound challenges that arise for intimate partnerships when love, power, and money converge.

Many advisors to legacy families excel at the technical dimensions of perpetuating intergenerational wealth, such as: managing financial assets, designing governance frameworks, and overseeing complex estate plans. Yet the intimate relationships at the heart of these families often go unaddressed. This article explores why the long-term success of legacy planning depends on the strength of the human relationships that must animate them and live in them. It invites advisors to become powerful allies in

helping couples navigate complexity with courage, clarity and care.

We'll return throughout this article to the story of one such couple, Michael and Maria. On paper, they had everything in place: a sophisticated estate plan, a well-structured trustscape, and textbook governance. Yet none of these safeguards could compensate for the slow erosion of connection in their marriage, largely brought about by the complexity of their situation. The real work with this couple wasn't about reallocating funding or reengineering governance, it was rebuilding the relational foundation beneath it all. While their names and some identifying information has been changed, their story is real.

This article offers a roadmap for understanding why intimate partnerships are the often-overlooked linchpin of legacy wealth, and how advisors can skillfully support the relationships that shape a family's long-term well-being.



## **What is a Legacy Family, and Why Couples Need Support to Actualize the Potential of their Wealth as Well-being**

**J**ames E. Hughes, a pioneering thought leader in family wealth governance and multigenerational stewardship, defines a legacy family as one that intentionally sustains its economic means, values, and connections across generations. His vision and definition of wealth goes well beyond financial capital to include human, intellectual, social, and spiritual capital. Hughes claims each of these forms of capital is essential for a family's long-term prosperity and well-being. He emphasizes stewardship, governance, communication, and the preparation of rising generations, rather than just providing for heirs financially.

(Throughout this article, we adopt Hughes' definition of legacy families and his inclusive understanding of wealth as well-being.)

Hughes is clear: the well-being and resilience of legacy families depend on trust-filled relationships and the capacity to adapt and grow together, and even the most sophisticated structures are only as strong





as the bonds of affinity that animate them. At the same time, anyone who has spent considerable time with legacy families knows that many couples at the heart of these families are quietly struggling, or have already divorced.

Perhaps when advisors begin to see couples as the foundations of legacy families and acknowledge the relational pressures they face, they will be better equipped to help those couples build the emotional

and structural capacities they need to thrive. On the other hand, when advisors leave these dynamics unaddressed, fractures often develop in the foundations of these families that can ripple through the generations.

## Love, Power, and Money: Balancing the Unseen Forces

*For Michael and Maria, the cracks in their relationship had been quietly forming for years. On the surface, their family had all the right pieces in place: an airtight estate plan, active philanthropic commitments, and strong financial safeguards. Underneath, however, unresolved tensions over gender roles, shifting power dynamics, and unspoken expectations had eroded their connection. The breakdown of their marriage wasn't just a private matter; if unaddressed, it could destabilize the very foundation of their family's long-term cohesion in their overall enterprise. The crisis at their nonprofit that prompted their late-night call for help was only the visible appearance of a much deeper fracture.*

**A**n anyone who has been in a long-term intimate partnership comes to understand that marriage, even under the best of circumstances, asks a great deal of us. It can feel like a lifelong commitment to grow our self awareness and heal our deepest wounds in the presence of someone who keeps bumping into our most vulnerable parts. It can seem like the parts of us we'd rather not acknowledge show up in high definition. One of our clients once said with a smile, "Marriage is agreeing to live with someone who not only sees your blind spots, but parks in them."

When you layer on the complexity of legacy wealth, a marriage is never just about working through the vicissitudes of love. When the money never runs out, neither do the complications and power dynamics. A marriage becomes a container where love, identity, influence, family loyalties and financial stewardship swirl together, often without a shared map for navigating the terrain.





*For Michael and Maria, that terrain shifted dramatically after 15 years of marriage, when a significant liquidity event in Maria's family catapulted their financial reality to a whole new level. On paper, they were prepared. In practice, their relationship was not. Michael, a third-generation entrepreneur, had long assumed the role of financial steward in their marriage. Maria, who had stepped back from her career to raise their children, suddenly found herself the beneficiary of extraordinary resources. At the same time, she felt disconnected from the decisions about how those resources were structured. Resentment festered. Power struggles emerged. What had once felt like a shared life began to feel very unsettled.*

To be sure, living with legacy wealth offers couples many blessings, but it also brings predictable challenges. Inheritance guilt, status anxiety, performance expectations, difficulty trusting others, and loyalty binds between extended families are just some of the relational challenges that can quietly destabilize even the most well-intentioned unions. These dynamics sometimes even begin to surface during prenuptial negotiations long before either party fully understands the emotional complexity of their situation.

While many people without legacy wealth imagine inheritance as an unqualified blessing, every inheritor we've worked with knows otherwise. Receiving substantial amounts of money one didn't earn can be a psychologically complex and spiritually disorienting experience. When this reality is interwoven into the already formidable task of growing a long-term loving marriage, you often get an emotional pressure



cooker. Differing beliefs about what money means and how it should be spent, invested, or given away, almost always turn up the heat in unexpected ways. These differences are rarely given their proper weight while dating nor are they addressed during the prenuptial process despite the fact that they are known drivers of marital discord and divorce.

Instead of exploring their differences with curiosity and compassion, couples often fall into familiar protective patterns such as withdrawing, blaming, controlling, or appeasing whenever the emotional temperature rises around financial matters. While these reflexes are entirely understandable, they tend to polarize rather than connect. As a result, the challenges of wealth integration for inheritors are often



intensified within the marriage, rather than approached as a shared opportunity or a co-regulated responsibility.

Additionally, these relationship tensions rarely unfold in clear, well-lit spaces. Instead, they simmer in a cauldron of opaque power dynamics, unspoken loyalties, and decision-making processes that can feel as mysterious as they are consequential. Even emotionally intelligent couples can struggle to find steady footing without skillful support.

**“When you layer on the complexity of legacy wealth, a marriage is never just about working through the vicissitudes of love.”**

And here’s the paradox: the difficulties where these couples most need support from professional advisors are often the least acknowledged. In a culture that idealizes financial abundance as freedom, opportunity and security, it can be hard for couples in legacy families to name what isn’t working, and for their advisors to see what is really going on for them behind the scenes. Even close friends may minimize their pain or assume their resources should somehow solve all their problems. Compassion is often in short supply for very real challenges; as are the clarity, tools, and wise guidance these couples need to deal with these challenges effectively.

At the same time, the quality of a couple’s relationship has significant implications for family well-being at every phase of their relational life. From the integration of a new spouse into the broader family ecosystem, to the parenting of the next generation, to how endings are handled in divorce or death, for legacy families, a tremendous amount depends on how these crucial events are handled. Given these realities, these relationships can either become the quiet force that sustains a family’s wealth, or the hidden fault line that threatens it.

## **Two Rivers, One Current: Merging Family Legacies**

**T**he challenges that shape a couple’s life in a legacy family go far beyond how they personally handle the financial resources in their care. One reason for this is because a marriage is not simply an intimate bond between two individuals. It’s also the confluence of two family systems, each with its own beliefs about money, legacy desires, culture, traditions, history, styles of conflict, and ways of ensuring belonging.

It’s like two rivers meeting, each with its own course, depth, speed, and sediment in the water. When they merge, they create a new current that takes a new shared course. Ideally, both partners honor all that



came from upstream in both families of origin while forming something stronger together. Thriving couples don't resist this merging. They respect where they each came from, learn from their differences, and integrate the best of both.

Too often in legacy families, one family culture dominates. Its customs, values, and financial philosophies seem to shape everything from holiday schedules to philanthropic priorities to how children are raised. The patterns of the more powerful family system often become the default, especially when it controls the distribution of financial resources, the governance structures, and even the focus of advisors. This imbalance can lead to one partner feeling quietly erased or subtly coerced into conforming. While deep gratitude of new spouses is often profound, resentments can also build without an avenue of expression. Over time, the relationship can become unsteady; not just because of emotional tensions, but because of very real structural influences.



Imagine for a moment: one river is red, the other yellow, and when they join, they become orange. Yet some legacy families keep insisting after two families are joined in marriage that the water is still red and even long after the wedding, they behave as if only one origin story matters. This dynamic is often reinforced when one side of the family dominates communication (e.g. this family name is on the majority of emails, they host retreats, hold regular family meetings, and have a family office that may only serve their lineage.)

What began with hopes of an intimate partnership starts to feel like a steady annexation. When this happens, it is a denial of the truth of what's already happened in the merging of two families, especially after children are born with two different sets of grandparents. Emotional "dams" often result, whether because of decisions that exclude one partner's family, governance structures that limit shared authority, or subtle dismissals of traditions that don't match the dominant narrative.

As with water, dammed-up emotions build pressure. Cracks eventually form and what's been suppressed (emotions, perspectives, family loyalties) can seep through or surges forth, often in destructive ways. It is important to understand that the floods that can result don't just cause havoc for the couple, they can reshape an entire family system. Perhaps the most heart wrenching consequence can be on the children standing downstream, who may feel pulled to choose one side over the other. On purely practical levels,





the high cost of these kinds of divided loyalties often show up in divorce settlements, litigation, and emotional fallout that changes the way wealth is structured and governed. Without dedicated repair efforts, the legacy that is being passed on can be one filled with resentment, and even desire for revenge in the rising generation.



*For Michael and Maria, the imbalance between the two family rivers was subtle but consequential. His family had spent generations cultivating a strong work ethic, clear expectations, and governance protocols, while hers placed more emphasis on generosity, fluid roles, and personal freedom. For years, these differences were tolerable, and at times even welcomed. But when Maria's inheritance shifted the financial landscape, their divergent cultures clashed.*

*His careful approach to structuring the new assets, while deeply appreciated at times, began to feel controlling to her. Her adaptive style, while creative and relaxed, began to feel irresponsible to him. What had once been a natural blending of traditions had now become a battle with serious emotional intensity.*

*Our work involved helping them see the blended water they were standing in. Instead of arguing over whose river was "right", they learned to embrace the richness of both. As they acknowledged and integrated their distinct inheritances, in all their forms, their relationship gained strength in the relational process of co-creating a new blended way forward.*

Thriving legacy couples consciously name the currents shaping their lives and blend them with intention. They make room for differences, contain habitual reactivity, honor both sets of roots, and resist being pulled entirely into one family's gravitational orbit. Rather than reinforcing the dominance of one family culture, they create spaces where both feel valued for their contributions to the relationship. At times, partners remind each other that true partnership doesn't mean perfect symmetry, but it means mutual respect. This form of balance creates a nutrient-rich flow that can support abundant life for generations.

## **The Currencies of Love: Giving, Receiving, and Finding Balance**

**B**eyond honoring the merging of two family systems, thriving couples in legacy families must also master something quieter, but just as essential in the art of finding a dynamic intimate balance in the countless acts of daily giving and receiving. Healthy couples grow their bonds by acknowledging how they need one

another. They then make conscious efforts to take care of each other through ongoing exchanges in the process of living shared values while pursuing a shared purpose.

To do this requires a form of vulnerability and mutuality that is counter-cultural for many. However, for couples to thrive in the shadow of intense love, power, and money dynamics, partners must resist the modern ideal of radical independence in favor of acknowledging their inter-dependence. When both partners can openly and maturely recognize that they are incomplete without the other, a deep bond of respect and love can be strengthened.



Thriving marriages require both spouses to give and to receive, in many forms, over time. This is the true lifeblood of intimate satisfaction. However, in the context of significant fiscal diversity, the dynamic balance of normal intimate exchanges can easily be distorted. When the amount being given, and received in the financial arena is drastically out of balance, this area can begin to overshadow other forms of exchange and erode a sense of genuine reciprocity. It can feel like one partner gives without receiving in return; or like one partner consistently takes without reciprocating. In cases like this, couples that don't consciously broaden their focus can become chronically imbalanced, leading to resentment or disconnection.

While financial generosity can fuel healthy appreciation and be a great source of blessings for couples, it can have a darker “shadow” element. Giving substantial amounts of money to one's spouse can subtly lead to a feeling of entitlement in the giver, and chronic indebtedness in the receiver. Our clients often feel a breakthrough when they deeply acknowledge that money is just one of many “currencies” of great value that flow through a healthy relationship. Other currencies include things like: attentive presence,



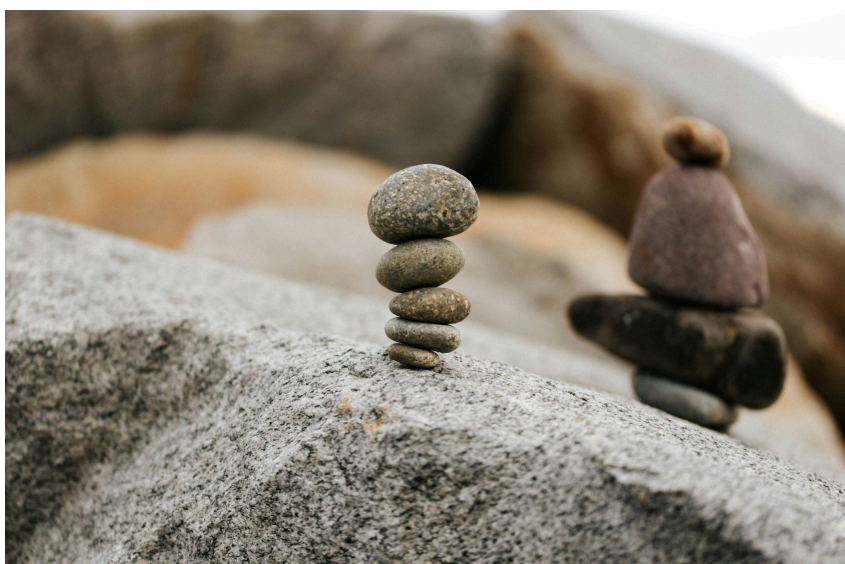


deep listening, strong leadership, depth of insight, physical affection, health and wellness commitments, spiritual attunement, social savvy, inspired intuition, child-rearing acumen, household management skills, emotional intelligence, etc. These forms of contribution often go unnamed (and sometimes unappreciated) but when brought to light, their essential contribution to sustaining the couple and the family is often clear.

**“Thriving marriages require both spouses to give and to receive, in many forms, over time.”**

Additionally, another turning point comes when they realize that love is not served by measuring static transactional equality, but by finding a balanced mutuality over time. When this is operating well, both partners feel seen and valued for what they bring, even if those contributions are wildly different. A spouse who offers much in the way of financial capital may need to learn how to receive attention, affection, insight, honest feedback, and emotional warmth. Once this receiving “muscle” is developed, the cumulative weight of all forms of contribution can be sensed. Additionally, a spouse who doesn’t bring much money into the relationship may need support to claim their own value, and to honor their ability to contribute meaningfully through other currencies, especially in a culture that highly values the power of the almighty dollar.

It can be remarkably painful for a spouse to discover just how difficult it is for a significant wealth creator or inheritor to acknowledge (or even to feel) that they have needs their money can’t satisfy. This dynamic is intensified by cultural and religious traditions that claim “it is better to give than to receive.” In these situations, a spouse who has brought few financial resources into the marriage can feel frustrated in their attempt to offer their unique gifts or begin to minimize their own contributions compared to what the money is doing for the couple. This is especially true in families where financial capital seems to get a majority of the focus of extended family members and advisors.



All of these areas tend to become especially delicate, and often emotionally triggering, for both partners when they are unaware of the critical importance of balanced exchange. However, when approached with intention and active navigation of the pressures, the relationship can become a constant flowing back and forth of many different currencies: financial, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and relational. Couples who hold the intention to both give AND receive often renew the experience of feeling being in love through these efforts on a regular basis.

*For Michael and Maria, the loss of balance came after Maria's inheritance changed the financial terrain. They had agreed that Michael's financial expertise would guide their investment decisions and legal structures; but over time, Maria felt increasingly sidelined and a loss of agency over "her money" and over their shared future. Gratitude gave way to frustration on both sides and resentments grew.*

*Our work focused on restoring a sense of balance and mutual contribution, not just on paper but in lived experience. We helped them recognize what each was bringing into the relationship:*

- *Leadership and long-term vision*
- *Emotional support*
- *Presence, care, and time spent together*
- *Social engagement and philanthropic skill*
- *Parenting their children in the new reality*
- *Legacy stewardship*
- *Financial structuring and governance discipline*

*As these "currencies" came into view, their posture toward each other changed. Their conversations softened. Their collaboration returned. Most importantly, they both felt needed and valued again.*

Ultimately, love in the context of financial abundance isn't about who gives more. It's about whether both partners feel they are needed, and that their relationship is a place of active exchange where they can both contribute something meaningful that is received deeply by their partner, over and over again. Every authentic exchange in this way serves the growth of the relationship and each of the individuals.

## **The Compounding Benefits of Investing in Couples' Relational Growth**

**S**ustaining loving relationships amidst the gravitational pull of the love, power and money triangle of intense energies requires more than affection or even devotion. It requires skill. In the high stakes realities of where legacy families often play, these skills include: the ability to communicate clearly, to manage emotional reactivity maturely, to navigate power dynamics adeptly, to maintain boundaries intentionally, to tolerate relational intensity calmly, to deal with emerging complexity wisely, and to hold



space simultaneously for both individual pursuits and shared purpose. These are all learnable capabilities that can become priceless assets in legacy families. Like any worthwhile investment, efforts to grow these human capital assets compound over time, paying massive dividends far beyond what's visible on a balance sheet.



When couples commit to developing the relational expertise needed in this unique condition, the benefits ripple outward. Their relationship becomes a stabilizing force, for each other, for their children, their extended family, and the broader enterprise they help lead.

Conversely, when conflict, distrust, or resentment take root in a couple's relationship, the costs can be steep both emotionally and financially.

Marital discord often leads to fragmentation in governance, inheritance disputes, fractured sibling relationships, diminished trust, and disengagement in the rising generation. Many legacy families have experienced divorces that trigger costly legal action, forced restructuring of assets, and lasting psychological fallout across the family system.

The good news? Relational resilience can be cultivated. With attention, practice, and support, couples can grow into the maturity their family legacy demands. Spouses can be an invaluable support to each other in the process of integrating inherited wealth, especially when advisors focus on relational health as seriously as financial health. Proactively weaving conversations about decision-making, trust, and emotional balance into discussions about trusts, governance, and succession, can create transformative impact. By doing so, advisors become more than financial planners or specific content area consultants. They become active stewards of enduring legacies.

## **Advisors as Legacy Builders: Strengthening the Foundation Where Love Meets Financial Wealth**

*I*n recent years, the family wealth advising field has made important strides in understanding families as systems. Advisors are learning to look beyond tax efficiency and investment strategy to include governance, values alignment, and generational engagement. Yet our experience proves they have an





opportunity to shift their lens even further. They can take a more active role in supporting couples' relational health *alongside* legal structuring, financial oversight, and governance planning. This doesn't mean playing therapist or overstepping professional boundaries. It means acknowledging what's already true: that the couple's ability to collaborate, communicate, and co-lead has profound implications for every other part of the system.

In practice, this might look like: asking relational questions, encouraging intentional reflection, making room for both partners in meetings, surfacing the subtle dynamics that shape decision-making, or referring the couple to skilled relationship professionals when deeper support is needed.

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Some advisors hesitate here. The emotional terrain of marriages in their client families can feel messy or outside the scope of their role. Though very often, advisors working in their systems are the ones the couple already trusts, and when the relationship is strained or uncertain, that trust becomes a vital bridge.

By seeing the couple as an essential part of the legacy, not just a functional team or a risk to manage, advisors step into a different kind of leadership. By strengthening the human foundations of legacy families, they help wealth to serve its highest purpose and become legacy builders in the truest sense.

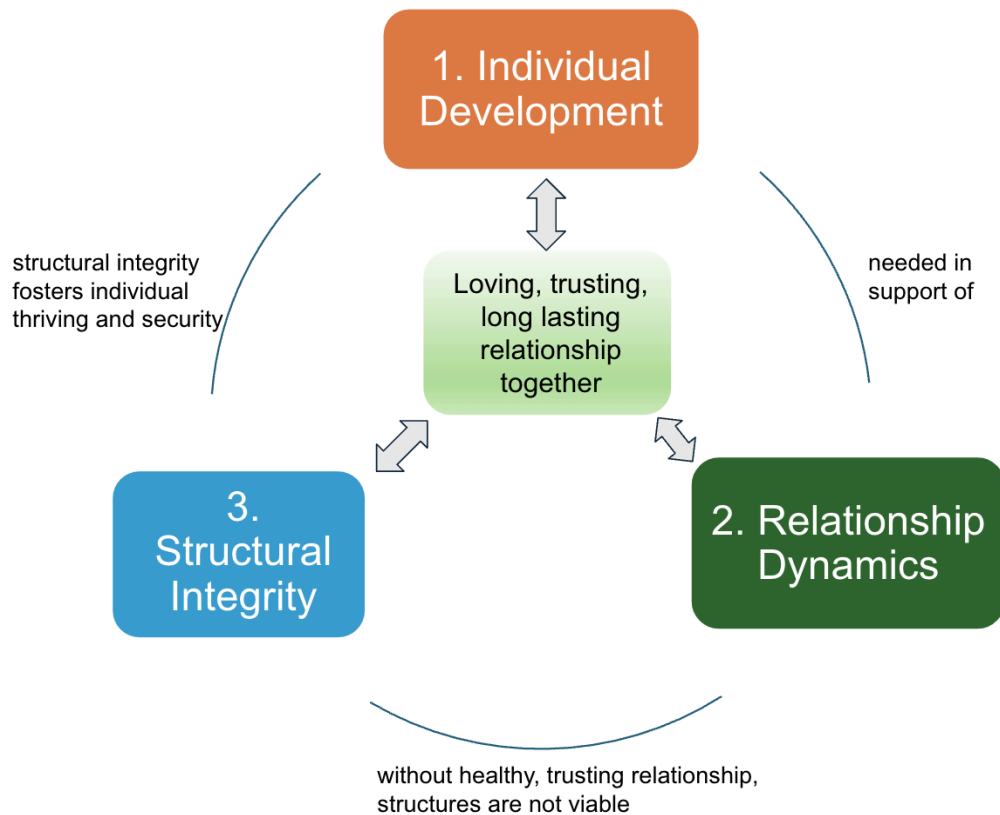
### **Three Pillars of Enduring Family Wealth: The Interdependence of Individual, Relational, and Structural Work**

**I**n legacy families, sustaining a strong couple partnership across life stages, shifting identities, and evolving complexity requires deliberate attention to three interwoven domains:

- Individual Development
- Relational Dynamics
- Structural Integrity

These form what we call the *Dynamic Loop of Enduring Intimate Partnership*.





- Like a living ecosystem, each domain influences, stabilizes, and contributes to the other domains. When one element is neglected or undernourished, the whole system becomes vulnerable.
- Without individual development, a partner may lack the self-awareness, emotional resilience, or grounded identity needed to engage in healthy relational dynamics.
- Without relational work, even the most self-aware individuals can lack relational intelligence and get caught up in recurring patterns that don't serve the growth of the partnership.
- Without structural clarity that includes clear agreements, shared decision-making frameworks, and well-designed governance, even otherwise strong relationships are often burdened by unnecessary strain and confusion.

These three pillars are not separate tasks to be checked off, they are a co-creating system, dynamically interacting in real time. Strong intimate partnerships emerge when all three are consciously nurtured and seen as mutually reinforcing.

In practice, both individual and relational development can be slowed or stunted by the comforts, expectations, or entanglements that accompany legacy wealth. Advisors who recognize the centrality of

learning and development in these three areas across the lifespan can make a powerful difference. Increasingly, legacy families are weaving support for lifelong learning and growth into the fabric of their culture:

- Some now encourage each adult family member to craft a personal development plan as part of their ongoing stewardship responsibilities. These plans are revisited and updated annually.
- Others are investing in monthly relationship-building workshops, treating relational capital with the same seriousness and intentionality as financial capital.
- Others provide resources for family members to hire individual coaches or to attend relationship development retreats to grow their relational skills over time.

The impact of this work is tangible. As couples grow their communication skills, deepen their emotional fluency, clarify their individual purpose, and strengthen their ability to navigate tension, they show up in governance roles with greater ability, more empathy, and far less friction. When those structures, in turn, are well-designed, reflect the family's values and support each partner's voice, the loop becomes truly generative, nurturing a resilient, evolving partnership at the heart of the legacy.



## **An Advisor's Guide to Strengthening Couples and the Legacies they Shape**

**T**rusted advisors are often uniquely positioned to help, and surprisingly unaware of the impact they could make. What seems to be needed first is a new level of recognition about how intimate relational well-being is an essential element to long-term wealth stewardship.

The following ten strategies, drawn from The Lovins Group's work with legacy families, can serve as a practical guide for advisors seeking to support the couples in their care. They are paired with questions that might offer a starting point for advisors to engage in meaningful conversations in each area.





## ***1. Support a Relationship-Centered Prenuptial Process***

Couples entering marriage in the context of legacy wealth need more than a sound legal document to protect financial assets. They need a process that fosters mutual understanding, skill building, and shared vision. Advisors can encourage prenuptial work that: helps partners discover their “hard-wired” money beliefs; explores their respective histories with wealth; names their hopes and fears; and encourages reflections into the various ways each can contribute to the growing of a true intimate and financial partnership. When done well, a prenup becomes a foundation, not a fault line.

Example questions:

- What have each of you learned about money, explicitly or implicitly, from your families growing up?
- If this agreement could reflect your deepest hopes for your partnership, not just your assets, what would you want it to say about how you commit to caring for one another?

## ***2. Normalize Financial Differences and Build Mutual Respect***

Differences in earning power, financial literacy, or family background can trigger patterns of condescension, avoidance, or passivity. When financial resources are unequal, advisors may unconsciously devalue contributions that aren’t monetary. Advisors who are aware of the importance of balance can foster environments where both partners are treated as equally valued voices, and where the relationship is central to their focus alongside the financial capital in their care.

Consider asking questions like:

- What are some ways each of you contributes to your life together that you’d like to see better understood or appreciated?
- How do you want to make room for both of your voices in financial decisions, especially when one of you has more experience or capital?

## ***3. Address Power and Control Dynamics with Care***

Money carries influence, and influence can get important things done. It can also easily become a destructive power imbalance while couples relationships thrive in mutuality. Advisors can help couples clarify how decisions are made, bring awareness to the unconscious exercise of power and avoid triangulation. When power dynamics are acknowledged and made explicit, the relationship has room to rebalance. Remember that often “formality is your friend” when it comes to big decisions that will affect a marriage.

- When financial decisions arise, how do you typically explore each others’ perspective and decide who has the final say?



- Are there places where either of you feels overruled or invisible when it comes to decision-making?

#### ***4. Reinforce Boundaries that Protect the Partnership***

Extended family, friends, or advisors can inadvertently create strain or overreach. Advisors can encourage the creation of clear boundaries around decision-making, financial requests, parenting, and time commitments. They serve the well-being of the family when they respect these boundaries and prioritize ways the couple acts as a unified front.

- Are there situations where the demands or opinions of extended family or advisors have made things harder for the two of you as a couple?
- What kinds of decisions feel most important for you to make together without outside pressure or interference?



#### ***5. Foster Shared Values and Purpose***

Beyond shared financial goals, couples thrive when they co-create a vision for how their wealth can help them express their purpose and support a meaningful contribution to something larger than themselves. Advisors can help surface values that serve as an anchor in both calm and storm.

- If we were having a conversation 20 years from now, looking back, how would you hope your talents and resources made a difference: for your relationship, for your family, for others?
- When you think of your most precious shared values as a couple, what might support you living your values more fully as a couple?

#### ***6. Honor Each Partner's Family of Origin***

Every marriage is the union of two family systems, each with distinct values, traditions, and histories with money. Advisors can encourage conversations that respectfully hold both family cultures as important, regardless of which side brings greater financial capital. This might include actively supporting rituals that integrate all family roots.

- What traditions or values from each of your families would you like to carry forward in your own life together?
- Are there unspoken assumptions from either side of the family that might be shaping how you think about money or roles in the relationship.



## ***7. Encourage Financial Education for Both Partners***

Literacy builds agency. Advisors can offer inclusive education that empowers both partners to engage with confidence. When both partners understand the financial landscape, they can make decisions together. Advisors can play a crucial role in supporting informed choices, collaborative planning, and balanced participation in stewardship.

- What parts of your financial life would you like to feel more confident or informed about?
- How can we help make sure both of you feel equipped to fully participate in your current financial decision making or your financial future?

## ***8. Celebrate Contributions in All Forms***

Genuine appreciation is powerful nourishment for couples, as long as it goes both ways. Advisors can encourage couples to recognize and name the many currencies of contribution and the ways each takes care of the other. Couples with unequal financial resources often need guidance to recognize the importance of growing a culture of gratitude that nourishes both partners.

- What are some of the ways you each show up for this partnership that might go unnoticed but really matter?
- How do you express appreciation for each other's contributions, and is there anything you wish happened more often?

## ***9. Promote Emotional Resilience and Advanced Communication Skills***

Legacy couples face unique psychological pressures: loyalty binds, status anxiety, inheritance guilt, belonging challenges and more. Advisors can normalize these experiences and reinforce the importance of growing specialized skills. When patterns of disrespect are noticed, they can direct couples to skilled professionals who can support their emotional development and communication skills when emotions run hot.

- Are there conversations that feel especially hard to have with each other when emotions are high?
- What helps you stay connected when you disagree, or what tends to get in the way?

## ***10. Advocate for Repairing Relationship Damage, Early and Often***

Conflict is inevitable. Damage happens even in the best of circumstances. The key is whether couples can repair. Advisors can encourage couples to view tension as a normal part of long-term partnership, and to seek support early rather than waiting for patterns to become deep divides. They can stay neutral and encourage professional guidance, helping couples find their way back to trust.

- When there's tension or conflict, what helps you find your way back to trust?





- Is there something unresolved between you that keeps resurfacing and might be worth looking at together with support?

Advisors who incorporate these kinds of conversations do more than stay in their lane. In a way, they expand the road in their work by helping couples grow stronger, reduce risk, and create relationships that can bear the weight, and the promise, of legacy wealth.

## When Love Isn't Enough: Navigating Divorce Without Fracturing the Legacy

Not all marriages are able to last forever, and there are many valid, important reasons why a relationship may need to end. When advisors witness long term and unresolvable conflict between spouses in their client families, they can still play a crucial role. Even when couples have love-filled beginnings and good intentions, it is wise to keep in mind that divorce rates today are extremely high. According to World Population Review, supported by multiple legal and demographic studies, 35% – 50% of first marriages in the U.S. end in divorce and that rate climbs to roughly 60% in second marriages and reaches over 70% for third or later marriages. (tuw.edu)



In legacy families, the blessings of security, opportunity, and influence don't offer the expected protections from these daunting statistics, perhaps because of their immense emotional and structural complexity. The pressure cooker of power dynamics, public scrutiny, intricate family expectations, and unspoken loyalties can be too much for some couples, no matter how hard they try to keep their love alive.

In these cases, the key lies in how the couple navigates the transition. How they communicate, co-parent, and engage with the broader family enterprise will largely determine whether the separation becomes a source of instability or might actually strengthen the family's long-term resilience. When a couple is supported to handle a separation with emotional maturity and relational skill, a divorce offers many opportunities to reinforce a family's core values and help to build the foundation for a healthier next chapter.

This is where skilled advisors make a critical difference. Those who help families develop healthy norms, build flexible governance, and create prenuptial agreements that honor both logistics and emotional



realities, support long-term resilience. By addressing the possibility of divorce before it becomes a crisis, advisors dignify marriage, not diminish it.

**“The pressure cooker of power dynamics, public scrutiny, intricate family expectations, and unspoken loyalties can be too much for some couples, no matter how hard they try to keep their love alive.”**

Advisors who care deeply about supporting legacy families can acknowledge the strong possibility of divorce as a routine act of compassion and risk mitigation. Doing so proactively can serve as a powerful motivator to invest in the hard but beautiful work of developing the capabilities to relate well and, if needed, to end a relationship with clarity and care.

### **Three Steps Advisors Can Take to Advance Their Intention to Support Couples**

*If* you're interested in more actively supporting the couples you work with, but aren't sure where to start, here are three concrete steps that can increase your confidence, effectiveness, and impact:

- **Join a Peer Group:** Advisors who care deeply about their clients' well-being are increasingly forming multidisciplinary peer groups to share insights and sharpen their skills. Join an existing group, or create one, and advocate for regular focus on couple dynamics. Bring in guest experts to speak on topics relevant to the unique challenges legacy couples face.
- **Create a Couples' Resource Center:** There is no shortage of excellent coaches, books, videos, and exercises designed to help couples grow their skills and deepen their relationships. Curate a library of vetted resources and proactively share them with the couples in your care. (Contact The Lovins Group. We're happy to send a starter kit.)
- **Foster a Couple-Centric Culture:** Across cultures and spiritual traditions, rituals have long been used to mark transitions, strengthen bonds, and hold space for renewal in relationships. When woven intentionally throughout a couple's life-cycle, these rituals can serve as anchors for connection, growth, and shared meaning. Begin by supporting unique wedding ceremonies and new spouse welcome elements at family meetings. Collect and circulate stories of meaningful rituals from within your client family and around the world. Encourage continuous learning about long-term intimate partnership. Make professional help easy to access by keeping a trusted



referral list of coaches and therapists who understand the unique coupling challenges in legacy systems. Promote enrichment retreats and relationship-building opportunities designed for couples with complex lives.

When advisors take steps like these, they help normalize conversations about the challenges couples face, and create space for learning and growth before crises arise. By weaving relational awareness into family education, prenuptial processes, and governance development, advisors don't just prevent avoidable breakdowns, they lay the foundation for relational maturity and long-term legacy success.

## **Conclusion: The Linchpin of Legacy—Why Strong Couples Support Lasting Wealth**

**T**True legacy wealth isn't measured only in financial assets. It lives in the quality of relationships and the ability to channel resources and one's unique talents toward a meaningful purpose, connections, and contributions to others. At the heart of that effort is a question few advisors ask often enough:

How strong are the couples at the center of this family system?

It's essential to focus on succession plans, tax structures, and investment performance. However, no amount of planning can compensate for a breakdown in the primary relationships through which so many family decisions flow. When these relationships are strong - anchored in mutual respect, trust, and shared purpose - everything else is easier. When they falter, even the best-laid plans are vulnerable.





Supporting couples means more than helping them stay together in financial comfort. It means helping them become true intimate partners. That requires intention, skill-building, and honest conversations, especially in the complex territory of families with legacy wealth.

As one of our clients once said, “Falling in love is easy. It’s staying married for 10,000 Tuesdays that’s hard.” That’s especially true when the stakes include family enterprises, generational legacies, and the many pressures of managing the exercise of significant influence. With the right guidance, couples can rise to the challenge, not only surviving, but evolving into the kind of partnership that strengthens the entire family system and makes a great contribution to the world.

*For Michael and Maria, the turning point didn't come from a new governance strategy or legal intervention. It happened in their kitchen, when they began to truly listen again. When they learned to see each other, not just as co-parents or co-founders, but as whole people with needs, values, and history. Their legacy became less about what they would leave behind and more about how they would live together, now.*

In the end, what sustains legacy wealth is not the clarity of structures or the size of the estate, it’s the strength of the bonds between people. Couples are at the center of where those bonds are forged or lost. When advisors have the courage to attend to love, not sentimentally, but systemically, they just might shift the entire field of legacy advising.

To just stay married in the unique conditions of legacy wealth today might seem like a major accomplishment. But what if the goal was to grow relationships strong enough to endure, and wise enough to evolve, through all of life’s seasons so that love matures and deepens over time?

Empowering wealthy couples that take this journey can have an enormous ripple effect as they go on to impact all who come in contact with them.

When architects of wealth continuity become true cultivators and stewards of relational capital, perhaps something magical will occur. Helping ensure that what endures is the ability to learn how to love wisely, lead jointly, and evolve together. This could prove to be the most impactful inheritance of all.

***For further inquiries or to connect with one of our relationship focused consultants, please contact us at [hello@lovinsgroup.com](mailto:hello@lovinsgroup.com).***

