

FEBRUARY 2025

“At our Firm,
Your Estate Plan
is Not Business,
it’s Personal...”



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“In the coldest February,
as in every month in
every other year, the best
thing to hold on to in
this world is each other.”

- Linda Ellerbee

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

Hopefully, you have rsvp'ed by now to attend our FEBRUARY 5th, 2024 celebration of this small boutique firm surviving the ups and downs of an Estate Planning practice. You will be happy to learn that at this office, you are still handled by humans, we haven't transformed into AI bots quite just yet, and do you know why?

Because our actual 20th anniversary was last November! 😊 So indeed, we are still fallible, but you know we have your back! Ours just tend to take a back seat at times. But be it as it may, hoping to see you there!

RSVP at – <https://apel20.eventbrite.com>, or call us at 714-966-2646!

ESTATE PLANNING TALK

Don't forget about our talk with Valerie Pasion at
SEA COUNTRY SENIOR on March 11, 2025 @ 1PM.

City of Laguna Niguel – Sea Country Senior & Community Center
24602 Aliso Creek Road, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to February 2025! Before we elaborate, we want to extend our sincere thoughts and prayers to all the “Angelinos” who have endured a rough start of the year with these out-of-control fires and Santa Ana winds. We'll talk about this in one of the article this month, but for now, let's take a broader view for the rest of the year...

As the new presidential cabinet begins to shape the nation's direction, we are reminded of the importance of staying informed, adaptable, and proactive in both our personal and professional lives. Leadership changes often bring fresh opportunities and challenges—an excellent reminder to stay focused on your goals and to be prepared for whatever the future holds... Even an unexpected fire!

This month, we encourage you to prioritize estate and financial planning. Whether you're securing your family's future, optimizing tax strategies, or setting new business objectives, now is the perfect time to revisit your plans. A well-thought-out strategy provides the stability to weather change and seize new opportunities with confidence. Whatever your opinion may be on President Trump, it is a well-known fact that he is business friendly, and so it will be interesting to see how new tax law changes will come into play!

But February isn't just about planning—it's about embracing the journey! In this issue, we'll look at famous retired lawyer and renowned author Robert Sharma and his view on 'wealth'. We'll share some of the new changes we are making to the firm, and express our gratitude for your continued loyalty to us! Of course, don't forget this month we shall celebrate Valentine's Day, so be prepared to shower all your family and friends with unconditional love!

THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE FIRE OF THE GOLD COAST



The recent wildfires that have ravaged Los Angeles, particularly in areas like Pacific Palisades and Malibu, have left thousands of families facing unimaginable loss. Homes reduced to ashes, cherished memories gone, and communities forever altered. The emotional and physical toll is profound, and our hearts go out to every individual affected by this tragedy. Compounding the devastation, reports have emerged that some fire hydrants ran dry during the height of the fires, severely hampering firefighting efforts. City officials have indicated that the shortage was due to low water pressure, which hindered the ability to combat the fast-moving flames effectively. Others state our governmental bodies failed us miserably under the guise of environmental protection... Let's not get political though! 😞

Here are some objective observations - this situation has understandably led to frustration and concern among residents as fully operational hydrants could have helped minimize some of the damages, potentially saving homes and reducing the spread of the fire. Beyond the immediate destruction, there are ongoing concerns about the long-term impact on the environment. The intense heat from the fires can lead to soil damage, increasing the risk of landslides and erosion, especially with the onset of seasonal rains. In Pacific Palisades, for instance, a landslide severely damaged an unburned house following the fires, highlighting the precarious nature of the terrain post-wildfire. The unknown future of rebuilding in these areas adds another layer of uncertainty for residents who are already grappling with significant loss.

Assuming all goes well on the insurance front, what are the logistics for thousands of families who need to get their kids back to school, have a place to stay, and struggle with the loss of countless family pictures, heirlooms, etc... Though embarrassed to admit, I may have spent more time on YouTube reading the comment section than should be allowed. Having said that, it is a sad fact that many keyboard warriors show little compassion to people simply because they are either "rich, or a celebrity". The assumption is because you are 'well off', human emotion is out of reach? This state of mind is baffling to say the least!

In the midst of this turmoil, it is imperative to repeat and reiterate the importance in constantly working on your financials, being properly insured, and making sure all your legal documents are in place! Well, we are an estate planning firm after all People, it's our job to remind you of the lessons to be learned here! 😊

Engaging with insurance providers promptly is essential. With the insurance cost skyrocketing as of late, come prepared! Document all damages thoroughly and initiate claims as soon as possible. Understanding the specifics of your policy, including coverage limits and exclusions, can help set realistic expectations during the recovery process.

Estate planning also becomes a critical consideration in the aftermath of such disasters. Reviewing and updating your estate plan ensures that any changes in asset valuation or personal circumstances are accurately reflected. This may involve reassessing beneficiary designations, updating wills or trusts, and considering the tax implications of lost or damaged property. Additionally, it's important to address any immediate financial needs of family members or beneficiaries who may have been affected, potentially through emergency distributions or modifications to trust terms.

While the path to rebuilding is fraught with challenges, remember that you are not alone. Community support, legal assistance, and financial guidance are available to help navigate this difficult time. By taking proactive steps in managing finances, insurance claims, and estate planning, you can begin to rebuild not just your home, but also a secure foundation for the future. In closing, we extend our deepest sympathies to all those affected by the fires. The road ahead may be long, but with resilience, support, and careful planning, there is hope for recovery and renewal.

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

The 8 Hidden Habits
to Live Your Richest LifeRobin Sharma
Worldwide bestselling author of THE 5 AM CLUB

ROBIN SHARMA: THE WEALTH MONEY CAN'T BUY

The Wealth Money Can't Buy explores the concept of true wealth, emphasizing the intangible yet invaluable aspects of life that go beyond financial riches. It is a rather fitting reflection with the fires which transpired in Los Angeles last month. Written by a thought-provoking author, this book

challenges traditional notions of wealth, inviting readers to redefine success and satisfaction in their personal and professional lives.

The book begins by examining society's obsession with material success. The author argues that while money can provide comfort, security, and opportunities, it often distracts people from pursuing deeper forms of fulfillment. Through compelling anecdotes and research, the book highlights how the relentless pursuit of wealth can lead to stress, strained relationships, and a lack of purpose. Central to the book's thesis is the idea that true wealth lies in intangible assets such as health, relationships, personal growth, and inner peace. These elements, the author contends, create a more sustainable and fulfilling life than material possessions ever could. The book delves into strategies for nurturing these "riches," such as prioritizing time with loved ones, practicing gratitude, and investing in mental and physical well-being. Another key theme is the importance of meaningful work and purpose. The author challenges readers to reflect on their careers and daily activities, asking whether they align with their values and bring a sense of joy or contribution to the world. Financial success, the book argues, should be a byproduct of pursuing one's passions and making a positive impact rather than the ultimate goal.

The book also examines the role of community and connection. It underscores how supportive relationships, shared experiences, and acts of kindness enrich lives in ways that financial success alone cannot. Readers are encouraged to build meaningful connections and give back to their communities, fostering a sense of belonging and collective wealth.

Finally, *The Wealth Money Can't Buy* offers practical advice on achieving a balanced life. It provides actionable steps for managing finances responsibly while focusing on what truly matters. From simplifying lifestyles to cultivating mindfulness, the book equips readers with tools to find happiness and purpose in their unique journeys.

Throughout the book, the author weaves personal stories and real-life examples to illustrate the transformative power of redefining wealth. Readers are inspired to shift their perspectives and embrace a more holistic approach to success, one that values emotional, relational, and spiritual richness over material accumulation. *The Wealth Money Can't Buy* serves as a guide for those seeking a more meaningful and fulfilling life. It reminds readers that the greatest treasures are often those that money cannot purchase: love, health, purpose, and the joy of living authentically. This thought-provoking and inspiring book is a must-read for anyone looking to break free from the rat race and discover the true essence of wealth.

The Joy of Cooking with Loved Ones: A Recipe for Connection and Happiness

Cooking has long been more than a means to an end; it's an act of love, a creative outlet, and a way to connect with others. Sharing a kitchen with loved ones transforms a daily chore into a cherished experience, offering countless benefits for individuals and families alike.



One of the most immediate joys of cooking together is the bond it creates. The kitchen becomes a hub of teamwork and collaboration, where shared tasks foster communication and cooperation. Whether it's kneading dough, chopping vegetables, or simply setting the table, each step allows for moments of laughter, storytelling, and connection. These shared experiences strengthen relationships, creating memories that last long after the meal is enjoyed.

Cooking together also has emotional and psychological benefits. It encourages mindfulness, as the process demands focus and presence. Measuring ingredients, stirring sauces, and timing dishes pull us into the moment, offering a reprieve from the stress and distractions of daily life. Cooking with loved ones amplifies these effects, as the joy of companionship adds an extra layer of fulfillment.

Making cooking a family tradition is a wonderful way to ensure that these benefits are experienced regularly. Start by designating one day a week as a family cooking night. Involve everyone in the process, from selecting recipes to grocery shopping. Over time, this tradition can evolve into a meaningful ritual, something everyone looks forward to and remembers fondly.

Including children in cooking has its own set of rewards. It teaches them essential life skills, fosters creativity, and instills a sense of responsibility. Young kids can start with simple tasks like mixing or washing produce, while older children can take on more complex roles, such as following recipes or using kitchen tools. By cooking together, parents also create opportunities to pass down family recipes and cultural traditions, ensuring that these cherished aspects of heritage endure.

Cooking as a group also promotes healthier eating habits. When meals are prepared at home, families have more control over ingredients, portion sizes, and nutritional value. It's easier to introduce fresh, wholesome foods into the diet when everyone is involved in the preparation process. Moreover, children who participate in cooking are often more willing to try new foods, making it a great way to encourage healthy eating.

The benefits of cooking with loved ones extend beyond the kitchen. It fosters a sense of accomplishment and pride, boosts self-esteem, and cultivates a deeper appreciation for food. It's also an excellent way to unplug from technology and reconnect with one another in a meaningful way.

In a world that often feels rushed and disconnected, cooking together offers a delicious remedy. It's a celebration of togetherness, a chance to create something tangible and nourishing with the people who matter most. So, gather your loved ones, tie on some aprons, and discover the joy of cooking as a shared tradition—it's a gift that keeps giving, one meal at a time.



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HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

As we wrap up another Winter month, February offers the perfect opportunity to embrace the season's charm while staying focused on what matters most. Whether its cozy evenings spent with loved ones, tackling goals you set earlier this year, or simply taking time to reflect, there's plenty to savor and achieve before Spring arrives. But if we are to be honest with one another, California winters are rather... mild 😊.

We're thrilled about the journey ahead and are committed to serving you better than ever in 2025. Stay tuned for exciting announcements as we roll out new activities and initiatives designed to support and engage our valued clients. From educational workshops to special events, our goal is to ensure you have the tools and resources you need to thrive.

This month also brings Valentine's Day—a wonderful reminder to cherish the people who make life special. Whether you're celebrating with a partner, friends, family, or yourself, take a moment to express love and gratitude. Small gestures of kindness go a long way in deepening connections and spreading joy. As always, we're here to help with any of your estate planning needs. Whether you're starting fresh or revisiting an existing plan, our team is ready to guide you toward peace of mind and security for the future. Don't hesitate to reach out with questions or to schedule a consultation. Here's to making the most of February and building a bright year ahead together!