STAYWEALTHY

5 STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR AGING PARENTS' MONEY

Love and trust don't grant legal authority. A **durable power of attorney (DPOA)** for finances lets someone your parent chooses step in and manage their financial life — but only if it's drafted well and used correctly.

KEY INSIGHTS

01. **Durable" does all the work.** An ordinary POA dies the moment your parent becomes incapacitated — exactly when help is needed most.

02. **Immediate vs. "springing" matters.** Springing documents wait for a doctor to certify incapacity — often slow; immediate ones work now but require deep trust.

03. **No document means guardianship** — a public, months-long court process costing thousands, with ongoing oversight.

04. **A DPOA is help, not control.** It lets you act alongside a competent parent. Banks reject vague language — so name every power explicitly.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Have an **estate-planning attorney** draft the DPOA as part of a full plan — will or trust, healthcare POA, and advance directives.
- **Know which version your parents have** — immediate or springing. If nobody remembers, read the fine print.
- Grant the easily-missed powers **explicitly, with guardrails:** beneficiary changes, gifts, and digital assets.
- **Skip shortcuts.** Joint ownership exposes the money to your creditors; co-agents cause gridlock. Name one agent plus a backup.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. **Do your parents** have a durable power of attorney for finances — and is it effective immediately or does it spring?
2. Has it ever been **submitted** to a financial institution to confirm it will be accepted?
3. Could you, today, sketch **where their accounts** are and how their bills get paid?

ACTIONABLE IDEAS — THE 5 STEPS

If you've been named agent, or expect to be, do these — whatever the size of their savings.

1. **Submit it before you need it.** Get the document accepted at every bank and brokerage now — legal review can take weeks.
2. **Map their financial life.** Lead with love, not logistics. Note accounts, income, autopay bills, property, and insurance.
3. **Triage the bills.** Flag the costly-to-miss ones: property taxes, health, long-term care, and homeowners insurance.
4. **Document everything.** Save dated receipts in a shared drive, and keep a simple medical journal of meds and appointments.
5. **Sign the right way.** Sign as the agent: *"Robert Miller, by Susan Miller, as Power of Attorney"* — never your name alone, or you may be personally liable.

NEXT STEPS

→ If any answer above is "no," **start the conversation while everyone is healthy.**

→ Review the **whole plan** in the same sitting: will/trust roles, account titling, beneficiaries, and healthcare directives.

→ Ask the drafting attorney to review and update — especially if it's **more than a few years old.**