

Mark Her Words: “Move Forward on Your Own.”

Kathleen Rehl, Ph.D., CFP® (<http://kathleenrehl.com/>) addressed many Survivors during a recent “Dine and Dial” conference call for Military Survivors on the topic of **Moving Forward on Your Own**. That’s when she talked about a financial guide for Survivors. Dr. Rehl is a leading authority on the subject of widows and financial planning. She’s frequently invited to speak on this topic across the country to women’s groups and professionals who assist Widows. Kathleen’s world changed forever when her husband died. Five weeks later her widowed mother also passed. From her personal grief experiences, Kathleen’s life purpose evolved—helping other Widows and Survivors to feel more secure, enlightened and empowered about their financial matters. She is passionate about assisting her “Widowed sisters” to take control of their financial future. Her loss motivated Kathleen to write what has become the multi-award winning book: *Moving Forward on Your Own: A Financial Guidebook for Widows*, now in its fifth printing.

Kathleen shared that the death of a husband is possibly the most devastating event a woman will ever experience. She may wonder, “Am I going to be able to make it on my own?” Perhaps she feels overwhelmed and doesn’t know what to do next. During the conference call Kathleen was asked, “How does a Widow’s grief and emotions impact her money issues?” She responded by describing emotions and noted that feelings a Widow may experience during her grief and mourning may cloud financial decisions. Some of these emotions include: feeling numb. . .lost. . .emotionally. . .drained. . .abandoned. . .paralyzed. . .lonely. . .fragile . . . angry. . . weak. . .aimless. . .forgetful. . . helpless. . . frightened . . . overwhelmed. . .disconnected. . .vulnerable. . .relieved. . .pained. . .guilty.

She reviewed some of the ABCs, which applies to any Survivor:

A = Always ask questions. "Why is that financial recommendation good for me?"

B = Buyer beware. "If it looks too good to be true, it probably is."

C = Care for yourself. "Spend some of your time and your money with inexpensive self-care activities that improve your overall well-being."

Kathleen noted that Survivors may be largely unprepared to deal with the financial reality that sinks in during the aftermath of losing a loved one. She identified several common financial pitfalls. Kathleen also described some first steps a Survivor needs to take after the death of a loved one, including rating your life values. (An exercise was discussed to help one think about personal values.) She noted that issues for Widows range from which side of the bed to sleep on after a husband’s death, to financial matters such as those retirees face when Social Security payments for the household change.

Much of the dialog focused on questions describing a Game plan for action. Kathleen noted that it is common to feel guilty about receiving insurance money because someone died. This can lead Survivors, including Widows, to feel like they have more money than they will ever need. So they may make a lot of gifts. However, she cautioned that the sum of money, which looked large before, may not seem as plentiful after taking into account one’s future needs. Kathleen also discussed what she called a “Healthy Transition from being a Widow to becoming an Independent Woman,” with the goal of truly “Feeling Financially Secure.” Her one-page overview may be useful for gaining skills, resources and tools to help Survivors feel empowered to “Move Forward on Your Own.”

The two tools shared during this conference call are provided here, along with Kathleen’s blessing for you.