

# When Push Comes to Shove: Dealing with Family Conflict

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## Financial Advisors Can Help Ease Family Disputes

Emotions lie at the heart of family conflicts, and human beings are often reaction machines. Typical reactions may involve aggression, capitulation, or withdrawal. Financial advisors can help break the cycle of natural reactions. Here are a few ways you can help.

### Hot Buttons

Help family members understand the emotional triggers that set off certain reactions.

### Go to the Balcony

Suggest angry family members “go to the balcony,”<sup>1</sup> or distance themselves from an interaction so that they might cool off and view the proceedings more objectively, as a third party might.

### Take a Look Inside

Ask family members to look at their behavior and reflect on the emotions that may be encouraging them to act a certain way. And remind them that refusing to abandon positions, or compromise, can lead to resentment, family breakups, and even legal actions.

- **Elevate What’s Important**  
Get family members to focus on their interests—this can help diffuse anger and hostility.
- **Create Normative Decision-Making Structures**  
Form family constitutions or councils to develop strategy and wealth distribution policies. These are especially crucial for third and fourth generations where natural fragmentation occurs.
- **Highlight Shared Values**  
Separate the emotional issues surrounding family from the strategy driving business. Shared values can not only guide the family through its emotional issues but also guide the business in its development of strategy.

We are committed to helping advisors improve their business and prepare their clients for the future. Please contact your Lazard Regional Consultant or our Sales Desk at 1-800-823-6300 to learn more about our value-add offerings.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, 2nd ed., 2011  
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