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Financial Advisor Amy Begnaud describes her personal experience with divorce.

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Divorce & Money: Who's in Your Corner?

The Financial Advisors at **Begnaud Wealth Management Group** of Janney Montgomery Scott, LLC can help clients going through a divorce work toward a fair settlement and a bright future. **by MATT COSENTINO**



GARY BEGNAUD, CRPC®, CDFA® | FINANCIAL ADVISOR, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
AMY BEGNAUD, CFP®, CDFA®, CPFA® | FINANCIAL ADVISOR, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Amy Begnaud, like many people enduring a divorce, was anxious and fearful of her uncertain future. As she stood in the middle of her kitchen on a hot summer day in July 2007, with a baby in a high chair and two other young children running about, she suddenly felt paralyzed by the magnitude of decisions she would soon be forced to make. Although she always envisioned a long, happy marriage and never expected to be in this position, it was sinking in that this was her new reality and some days it felt like the weight of the world was on her shoulders.

Despite coming from a financial background and having a breadth of knowledge relating to investing and managing money, Amy had limited experience in the analysis of marital assets, along with understanding the impact of alimony, child support and college expenses. These foreign concepts would become some of the most important pieces of her divorce puzzle. Fortunately, she had an ad-

vantage that most women do not—right by her side was her father Gary Begnaud, who at that point had more than 25 years of experience as a Financial Advisor.

While Amy had full confidence in her attorney and mediator, she recognized that legal and financial wherewithal are not the same and welcomed Gary onto her team to take a collaborative approach to her financial situation during her divorce.

“Going through a divorce, even an amicable one, is very overwhelming,” she says now. “Even with my background it was hard to see the forest through the trees. I could have made several emotional and rash decisions that would have hurt me financially if it weren’t for my father remaining laser focused and unemotional about the financial decisions. Having someone that I trusted in my corner was paramount.”

A few years after her divorce was settled, Amy and her father formed their own financial services team and today they are partners at

Begnaud Wealth Management Group of Janney Montgomery Scott, LLC. Early on, it seemed like every month they were being asked for help from family members, friends or acquaintances going through a divorce, so in 2015 they both obtained the Certified Divorce Financial Analyst® certification, which less than 6,000 of the approximately 300,000 financial advisors in the country hold, according to the Institute for Divorce Financial Analysts and Cerulli Associates.

“When we discovered this designation, it was a no-brainer for us,” Amy says. “It was a natural extension of what we were doing and we were really passionate about it because we both experienced it together. Gary is not divorced but he was in the trenches of mine. What we’ve come to see is it’s an underserved segment of the population.” In their experience, a high percentage of those seeking assistance are middle-aged, educated women, many of whom were not heavily involved in the finances of their marriage. “The people who show up at our doorstep are sort of a reflection of who I was,” she says. “So, in this area of our practice, the focus is primarily on helping women understand their financial options and arriving at a financial settlement.”

Clients appreciate Amy’s transparency about her personal struggles with divorce, and after their case is settled they build a lasting relationship with her and Gary as their trusted advisors.

“I’m an open book about my own divorce and that has been huge. Women will tell me that they know I’ve been through it and that helps,” she says. “There are so many moving parts and I don’t care how smart you are or how proficient you are, there is a lot to handle, especially when you are thinking about decisions that will impact you for the next 40-50 years. I think it’s really important to have someone in your corner and that’s who we are.”

Amy and Gary took this path because they truly care about this underserved segment of the population and are proud to become their guides for life. “The women who come to us are so grateful that they found us, and then they stay with us,” she says. “Our long-term goal is to work with them as their financial advisor for years to come.” ■

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