

If Something Happens

The page your people will thank you for

In 2013, my parents died suddenly. My brother and I spent months as detectives in the museum of their lives. Every unlabeled photograph, every unknown password, every mysterious key added weight to a season that was already heavy.

This page is what I wish they had left us.

Think of it as a human instruction manual: who to call, where things live, which objects carry stories, and what your people are free to let go. A will handles the legal part. This page handles the human part.

Fill it out in one evening, with a pen, at the kitchen table. Start ugly. A page with crossed-out words beats a perfect binder that never gets made.

When you finish, do two things. Tell someone you trust where this page lives. Then put a note on your calendar to read it again once a year and fix whatever changed.

Grief will still arrive with a clipboard. This page hands your people the answers.

With love, and one less drawer full of mysteries,

Steve Gershik

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This page belongs to

Date completed (and dates reviewed)

1 CALL THESE PEOPLE FIRST

The friend, the sibling, the neighbor with a key. The people who should hear it from a person, in order.

Name	Relationship	Phone
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My attorney, financial advisor, or executor, if I have one

2 WHERE THINGS LIVE

Every blank you fill in here is a midnight phone call you're sparing someone.

My will or trust is located

My passwords live here, and here is how to get in

The main bank account is at

Insurance policies (life, home, health) are located

Bills that pay themselves automatically

Safe deposit box, storage unit, or other locked mystery, and where the key is

3 MY MEDICAL WISHES

Write it down while it's a calm Tuesday instead of a hard one.

My advance directive or living will is located

The person who speaks for me if I can't

What I most want them to remember about my wishes

4 OBJECTS THAT CARRY STORIES

Without the story, it's a ceramic bowl. With the story, it's a message. Pick three objects and write down why they matter.

Object 1

Its story

Object 2

Its story

Object 3

Its story

5 THE RELEASE

This may be the kindest paragraph on the page. Sign it as written, or write your own version below.

"I kept many things because they mattered to me. They do not all have to matter to you. Keep what you love. Let the rest go with my blessing, and without a single ounce of guilt."

Signed

Date

6 ONE MORE THING

The thing you never said clearly enough. Say it here.

This page came from "Grief Arrives With a Clipboard," an essay from Your Third Third, a newsletter about designing the part of life after you've built it all. Read more and subscribe at yourthirdthird.com.