05.07.26 | BRIDGE THE GAPS

# When the Financial Role Shifts: How to Take the First Step with Confidence

**Patty Lavoie, CPA, CFP® – Financial Advisor**

For many women, stepping into financial leadership isn't something that happens gradually. It often arrives all at once through a life transition, a change in partnership dynamics, or the realization that it's time to become more directly involved.

The shift can feel daunting. Not because you're incapable, but because you're stepping into a space that may have previously been shared, delegated, or simply not required of you.

The question isn't whether you're ready. It's how to begin in a way that builds clarity, confidence, and momentum.

## START WITH WHERE YOU ARE

Before diving into spreadsheets, accounts, or strategies, take a moment to ground yourself in your starting point. Much like building an effective advisor relationship begins with understanding your own preferences and engagement style, stepping into financial responsibility starts with self-awareness. Ask yourself:

- What do I already understand about our finances?
- What feels unclear or overwhelming right now?
- How involved do I want to be moving forward?
- What would feeling "in control" actually look like for me?

There's no "correct" baseline. Some women step in with partial knowledge, others with very little exposure. Both are valid starting points. What matters is recognizing that this is a transition, not a test.

## BUILD VISIBILITY BEFORE MAKING DECISIONS

When you're new to managing finances, it's tempting to jump straight into action by adjusting investments, changing accounts, or making big decisions. Resist that urge. Just as women engage differently with financial advisors depending

© 2026 Grimes & Company Wealth Management, LLC (d/b/a Grimes & Company) | One Technology Drive, Suite 100, Westborough, MA 01581

on their knowledge, confidence, time, and interest, your role in managing finances doesn't have to look one specific way. Your first role is not decision-maker, it's observer and organizer.

Start by gathering a clear, centralized view of your financial life:

| **Accounts & Assets** | **Liabilities (Debt)** |
|---|---|
| Bank accounts (checking, savings) Investment accounts (brokerage, retirement, pensions) Real estate or property holdings Business interests (if applicable) | Mortgage(s) Credit cards Loans (student, personal, business) |
| **Key Documents** | **Access & Logistics** |
| Tax returns (last 2–3 years) Insurance policies Estate documents (wills, trusts, beneficiaries) | Login credentials (securely stored) Names of advisors, attorneys, accountants Automatic payments and transfers |

You don't need to analyze anything yet. The goal is simple: Know what exists and where it lives.

## CREATE A SIMPLE SYSTEM YOU CAN MAINTAIN

Confidence doesn't come from knowing everything, it comes from having a system you trust. Dedicate small increments of time to help you feel organized and in-control.

| **Weekly (15-30 minutes)** | **Monthly (60 minutes)** |
|---|---|
| Review account balances Check for unusual transactions Stay aware of cash flow | Review spending vs. expectations Confirm bills and transfers Note any upcoming financial decisions |
| **Quarterly (60 minutes)** | **Annual (60 minutes)** |
| Review investments (at a high level) Revisit goals and priorities Prepare questions for advisors | Review of prior year's investments, cash flow and taxes Plan for cash needs for the coming year Address the impact of any expected changes |

Consistency matters more than complexity. A simple system you maintain will always outperform a perfect system you avoid.

## KNOW WHEN TO ASK FOR SUPPORT

Stepping into financial responsibility doesn't mean doing everything alone. In fact, one of the most effective early decisions is identifying who should be part of your financial ecosystem.

### SUPPORT TEAM CHECKLIST

- Financial advisor (planning, investments, coordination)
- CPA or tax professional
- Estate attorney

© 2026 Grimes & Company Wealth Management, LLC (d/b/a Grimes & Company) | One Technology Drive, Suite 100, Westborough, MA 01581

- Insurance specialist

If these relationships already exist, your role is to re-engage and re-establish communication. If not, start by asking: Who can explain things clearly? Who invites questions without judgment? Who helps me move from understanding to action?

The right support should expand your confidence, not replace your voice.

## WHAT PROGRESS ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

It's easy to assume confidence will arrive when you "fully understand everything." In reality, progress looks more like this:

- You recognize accounts and what they're for
- You understand the purpose behind key decisions
- You know who to call when something changes
- You feel comfortable asking questions
- You leave conversations with more clarity than confusion

Over time, what once felt unfamiliar becomes manageable and eventually empowering. Even with structure and support, there may be moments when it all feels like too much. That doesn't mean you're failing. It means you're in the middle of learning something new.

When that happens, come back to three anchors:

1. Pause decisions you don't fully understand
2. Return to your financial snapshot—clarity reduces anxiety
3. Ask one focused question at a time

You don't need to solve everything at once. You just need to take the next step.

## A FINAL PERSPECTIVE

Taking on financial responsibility isn't about becoming someone different. It's about becoming more informed, more involved, and more intentional over time. You don't need years of experience to begin. You don't need perfect knowledge to participate. And you don't need to do it the way anyone else does. You just need a starting point and the willingness to move forward from there.

This article is part of our **Bridge the Gaps** program, focused on helping women investors approach wealth with clarity and intention.

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES:

Please remember that past performance is no guarantee of future results. Different types of investments involve varying degrees of risk, and there can be no assurance that the future performance of any specific investment, investment strategy, or product (including the investments and/or investment strategies recommended or undertaken by Grimes & Company Wealth Management, LLC (d/b/a Grimes & Company), or any non-investment related content, made reference to directly or indirectly in this blog will be profitable, equal any corresponding indicated historical performance level(s), be suitable for your portfolio or individual situation, or prove successful. Due to various factors,

including changing market conditions and/or applicable laws, the content may no longer be reflective of current opinions or positions. Moreover, you should not assume that any discussion or information contained in this blog serves as the receipt of, or as a substitute for, personalized investment advice from Grimes. To the extent that a reader has any questions regarding the applicability of any specific issue discussed above to his/her individual situation, he/she is encouraged to consult with the professional advisor of his/her choosing. No amount of prior experience or success should be construed that a certain level of results or satisfaction will be achieved if Grimes is engaged, or continues to be engaged, to provide investment advisory services. Grimes is neither a law firm nor a certified public accounting firm and no portion of the blog content should be construed as legal or accounting advice. A copy of the Grimes' current written disclosure Brochure discussing our advisory services and fees is available for review upon request or at https://www.grimesco.com/form-crs-adv/. Please Note: Grimes does not make any representations or warranties as to the accuracy, timeliness, suitability, completeness, or relevance of any information prepared by any unaffiliated third party, whether linked to Grimes' web site or blog or incorporated herein, and takes no responsibility for any such content. All such information is provided solely for convenience purposes only and all users thereof should be guided accordingly. Please Remember: If you are a Grimes client, please contact Grimes, in writing, if there are any changes in your personal/financial situation or investment objectives for the purpose of reviewing/evaluating/revising our previous recommendations and/or services, or if you would like to impose, add, or to modify any reasonable restrictions to our investment advisory services. Unless, and until, you notify us, in writing, to the contrary, we shall continue to provide services as we do currently. Please Also Remember to advise us if you have not been receiving account statements (at least quarterly) from the account custodian./

© 2026 Grimes & Company Wealth Management, LLC (d/b/a Grimes & Company) | One Technology Drive, Suite 100, Westborough, MA 01581