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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

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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

- 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.

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