

Financial Planning Tips for the Sandwich Generation with Sherry Finkel Murphy

[00:00:00] Introduction and Guest Welcome

[00:00:07] **Candace Dellacona:** Welcome to the Sandwich Generation Survival Guide. I am your host, Candace Dellacona, and I am thrilled to welcome with me today, Sherry Finkel Murphy, who is joining us. Sherry, welcome. Thank you for joining us on the podcast.

[00:00:21] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Thank you for having me.

[00:00:23] **Candace Dellacona:** My pleasure.

[00:00:24] Sherry's Background and Skillset

[00:00:24] **Candace Dellacona:** So for our listeners, I want to share all about your background and all of your accolades here, Sherry. We are so excited to have you and have a great conversation talking about triple decker generation sandwich planning, especially as we come to the end of Women's History Month. Sherry provides financial and longevity planning, education through storytelling and mini courses. Sherry is also the author of a book called Wish Want Will, which is an excellent workbook available on Amazon. And she has another book coming out later this year. So we welcome you, Sherry.

[00:01:00] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here. I like to emphasize that I am not just an advisor to this cohort, who I call the women of a certain agency, but I'm a member.

[00:01:14] **Candace Dellacona:** And me too. I am also a member right along with you.

[00:01:17] The Concept of Madrina Molly™

[00:01:17] **Candace Dellacona:** One of the things that we talked about when we had our first conversation, Sherry, is what the concept of Madrina Molly™ is and what sort of brought you here and where you are in life.

[00:01:33] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** There have been many turns, circuitous and redundant and all kinds of things, but I'm here because in my financial planning practice, women come to me and these are highly capable, highly educated, high cash flow women, and they pull up their box of tissues and they proceed to make themselves wrong.

And my message is always first and foremost, stop making yourself wrong. We already have mothers for that. And second is you probably do a great deal more right than you

know. And maybe it's my job to reaffirm what you're doing right so that you can get a good night's sleep. And proceed with confidence. Where I guess my story begins is that I am I'll call myself a reinventionist.

I am on a second or third career, depending upon how you count them, and I did recredential myself in my early fifties.

[00:02:37] Challenges of the Triple Decker Sandwich Generation

[00:02:37] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** And so I understand the challenge of this triple decker club sandwich generation of figuring out how you're going to get through your career alive, so to speak, how are you going to get to the goal line. And it's hard, there are many headwinds, whether those headwinds are familial, your children, your parents, your significant other, or lack of a significant other, but employers are notoriously disloyal, And so we need to advocate for ourselves and also create a hedge, create a defense.

When you have a great defense, right? Defense wins championships. When you have a great defense, you can accept risk. So there's a lot of messaging there. In my case, two years ago, I was traveling along in my financial planning practice with mostly these women and their families. And my stepdaughter announced she was having her second child. I turned to my husband and said, ooh, we have to help. And so we planned to bounce between Saratoga Springs, New York, where I have a 97 year old mother living independently, and she's doing just fine. There's nothing wrong with her, except that she's 97, and in Ohio, where two of five grandchildren are, and that's where they need help.

And so we've been bouncing back and forth, and suddenly FINRA decides, oh, financial advisors, you've had your COVID holiday, we want you back in the office 51 percent of the time. And I said, oops, time to call an audible. Spent 2023 transitioning my wonderful clients to my hand chosen successor and January, 2024 launched Madrina Molly™.

[00:04:22] Financial Planning for Women

[00:04:22] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Madrina Molly™ is intended to be a little disruptive. There aren't enough financial planners to go around to understand women's stories. The domain was built around the data of 20th century men. And so we don't yet see ourselves in the data. It's coming, but we need to get there. So there are women who maybe they don't control the financial planning relationship. Their significant other has the relationship with the advisor, but they want to know what they don't know.

Or maybe these are women who cannot find a certified financial planner. And or they don't qualify because maybe their assets are tied up elsewhere in a corporate plan. Otherwise, they are not available. And all of these things can keep them from finding the right person to work with. I want to supply, let's call it financial planning light, that

enables these women to ask all the questions they want and receive the fiduciary care of a certified financial planner professional.

[00:05:28] **Candace Dellacona:** Sure. That was a great sort of segue to talking about the need for information, right? I think that one of the things in common that we all have in the sandwich generation is trying to figure out where we fit in and how, when we're caring for multiple generations among us, when we're the in between, how we get the data and the information that we need so that we can not only help our loved ones, but help ourselves.

We've talked about the concept of the triple decker sandwich generation and what that means. And you just described it, Sherry, because you talk about having a 97 year old mom and then children and grandchildren. So that is, by definition, a triple decker sandwich generation.

I think one of the things that's important to talk about is the origination of that and why it exists. Do you have any thoughts as to why maybe our sandwich generation is faced with the triple decker as opposed to the traditional sandwich generation?

[00:06:34] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Sure, and it is kind of amazing and I wish the press made more of an opportunity of it than a problem. And that is, this is the first time that four and five generations are living contemporaneously in history. That's never happened before. And in the developed world, we spent the 19th century working on the scourge that was child mortality, such that by the middle of the 20th century, children were making it to adulthood.

If you made it to five, you stood a better chance of making it to adulthood, and by the end of the Second World War more and more children were making it to adulthood. But after the Second World War, so the second half of the 20th century, was really devoted to aging and adding life. So, a life expectancy of 65 in the 1930s, 1940s, suddenly became 85.

And I think it snuck up on us. And we haven't prepared ourselves well enough for the opportunity that is those extra twenty years of what we'll call super adulthood. We're still searching for a name for the after work phase, but let's call it super adulthood.

[00:07:57] **Candace Dellacona:** Yeah it's not retirees anymore because I find that most retirees are busier in retirement than they ever were during their working years. You bring in an interesting point. Obviously healthcare has gotten better and in many ways has increased the longevity. And in doing so people are living a lot longer. But for many, the economics, the planning of it hadn't caught up with the actual longevity.

So if you look at the life insurance actuarial tables about life expectancy. I think the average age for a woman is above 80. And when you have people that, whose parents

mostly did not live to 80, they themselves had no expectation of that. And so I think it's really difficult doing the catch up.

And that's why those of us in the sandwich generation are sort of left holding the bag in many ways, whether economically or for a housing perspective. And I think that that's definitely interesting as it relates to triple decker sandwich generation, because what you've just shared with us is that you toggled between two places physically to fulfill your role in the triple decker sandwich.

[00:09:08] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** For, this is just anecdotal, I have to tell you that managing two rental townhouses is still cheaper than managing the house. So I'm one of those home wealth agnostics when it comes to financial planning. I'm not so sure the family homestead and maintaining it for 30 or 40 years is a great idea.

But.

[00:09:29] Housing and Flexibility

[00:09:29] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** We are practicing radical flexibility, and I think that's going to be my message to all, is that in every aspect of life, we need to be more flexible in order to achieve our happiness, because we're just so interdependent, and I don't think, again, I won't demonize anyone except maybe the press for not catching on to this.

The challenge with housing is not that hedge funds are somehow buying up all available single family properties. It is not that mortgage rates are too high. It is that the inventory of what we need is not there and we never really recovered from 2008 in order to create the housing inventory.

So what boomers want to downsize to is not being built. Their children cannot get into the colonial because it's just not there for them, never mind at whatever price. And you hear that building is starting again, fits and starts but in a volatile economy, we never know about the supply chain that is going to, make the builder start or stop again.

It creates, again, opportunity. I want to tell a story, the best way to illustrate this would be a client whose mom was widowed. Living in the family home, and at the same time, three adult siblings. At the same time, she and her partner were trying to get into their forever home. They had outgrown their starter home, and they wanted to get into their forever home.

Able to sell their starter home for a very nice price, but unable to find what they wanted and successfully bid on it. Mom is alone in her house, she's 40 minutes away. The other two siblings are several states away. They loved mom's house, so what they did was they sold their house, their starter home. They purchased mom's house from her, which as an estate planner, you can explain why that's a good idea.

Mom made the siblings whole. They renovated the first floor to create mom's first floor primary suite, redid the kitchen, drawer microwave, rounded corners, the things that she would require. In her years of frailty. And they completely renovated the upstairs from childhood bedrooms to their primary suite.

And everybody's happy because mom is safe, kids are managed we need to be creative.

[00:12:15] **Candace Dellacona:** I think you're right. I think that's one of the keys where it's flexibility and creativity. And for many of our listeners, cohabitation isn't necessarily an option. And we have multi generations of families that can't live in the same physical space, especially as you move closer to urban areas like New York City.

But I think what you point out is being open to the various possibilities. And so for even someone like you, Sherry, where you're actually traveling between two geographical areas and how that can still be multi generational living in many ways, you don't have to physically live in the same space to be beholden to the multiple generations and in many ways having a little bit of physical distance can actually work and you can still have the benefits of that multi generational living.

[00:13:06] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** So you just said a mouthful because we know that relationships with parents can be fraught. Adult children and adult parents they somehow revert to childhood and everybody takes a tantrum. I am a safe 15 minutes from mom and intend to stay that way.

[00:13:24] **Candace Dellacona:** Space. Yes.

[00:13:25] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** and it helps us care for one another. I mean, I think that there's some basics here.

Mom says, anybody's mom, says, I don't want to worry you. Look, we're already worried. And we'd be more worried if we were three states away and couldn't get to you. So my solution is 15 minutes away is a good middle ground there. It makes everybody comfortable, we both worry less. Same with Ohio, where the kids are.

Do we want to be on top of one another? No. But how cute is it that at the moment at least, until they get into their forever home, we are across the street? In the townhouse community and we've got a six and a half year old who's running errands between the two houses. You open the front door and you have a line of sight and so she can be seen going back and forth.

Whether she's picking up something from the freezer because their refrigerator overflows, ours does not. Or she's been sent to go bother grandpa because mom has to work because it's a two income household. All good, and again, reframing as an opportunity, because I think what parents don't internalize is that 95 percent of the time

you're going to spend with your kids is in their first 18 years. And after that, all bets are off.

[00:14:54] **Candace Dellacona:** Sure. So it could really be a beautiful time of life to have those daily interactions that you wouldn't otherwise have. And, it's not all, roses. And one of the things that, that we like to do here on the sandwich generation survival guide is show all sides.

Because in the beauty, there is also struggle, right? As we in the in between are thinking about and worried about our others, our other layers, our other in between folks, whether it's our parents, our aging mothers in Saratoga Springs or our grandchildren in Ohio. We are kind of in this purgatory where we're beholden to two different generations.

We're stuck in the in between. So how does one think about still living the life that they want to live and finding the joy when you are beholden to other groups of people? Do you have any tips for us, Sherry?

[00:15:59] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** So you make a really good point. And that is many of our cohort has the experience, as a mother, of being on hold. You're on hold that first few years when your children are little before you can get back to your independence, because they're not independent. Well, guess what? You may go on hold again later in life.

[00:16:23] Living in the Now and Financial Tips

[00:16:23] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** And so, if there is a tip to be had, it's to calculate based on when you had your kids and when your parents are likely to experience frailty, where are your years of freedom?

[00:16:39] **Candace Dellacona:** Hmm.

[00:16:39] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** And I frequently would see, again, meet people and they'd say, I want to retire at 60, and I would say, how old are your kids?

And they would tell me and I'd say, you realize your second child will still be a sophomore in college. Do you really want to pay for that out of savings? Wouldn't it be better to pay for it out of cash flow? On the flip side, we make these great plans to, I'm making this up, travel the world for a month and a half at 65. This is my gift to myself, I shall retire at 65 and I will go gallivant around Europe just like we did when we were 22.

And that's fine except that if you're 65 you may have an 85 year old parent who is still alive and a generation and a half ago that parent would have passed on. So not for nothing but you're gallivanting at 65. Not so much. My thought, and I have a little talk track I call The Year of Not Saving, my thought is how about you pull that sabbatical or

pull that big vacation forward into the point where the kids are old enough so that they won't burn down the house if you leave them.

The parents are not yet frail, so I'm thinking about 55, and in exchange for what I call the year of not saving, which is not contributing to your 401k that year, using it in the next year, to take the vacation, you work for one more year. Just put off distributing your assets for one more year. Now what I know, I'm trying not to make this convoluted, what I know as a financial planner is that anything you do to delay distributing your portfolio is going to improve your financial plan for retirement.

And boy, is it hard to fund 35 years of retirement, easier to fund 34. Easier to fund 33, etc. I know that if you put off distribution, that's going to be a good thing. There's actually math that supports that. Do I have your permission to go into just that tiny bit of math?

[00:18:55] **Candace Dellacona:** Absolutely.

[00:18:55] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Okay. Okay. I don't want to scare anybody away. So let's say I'm going to put round numbers 20,000 dollars into my 401k at age 55 and my corporate match will be 10,000 dollars, 30,000 dollars is now in my 401k. And because we assume that money doubles every 10 years in the stock market, by the time I'm 65, that will be 60,000 dollars. And let's say I've been a good saver, I've done everything I was told to do, and I have a million dollars in my 401k at 55.

At 65, that will be two million. I can take my month and a half gallivant, around the world with a nest egg of 2,060,000 dollars at 65, or I can wait and have that portfolio grow 10 percent more one tenth of a doubling, and I can take my gallivant at 56. Retire at 66 with 2.2 million. So I now have 140,000 dollars more in my nest egg to work with in retirement by delaying distribution.

[00:20:16] **Candace Dellacona:** And as a financial planner, I would suggest trading that off for going ahead and living your life.

I love that so much and it makes me so excited to actually hear a financial advisor, a financial planner, someone who has, the math credibility to be able to say and give permission to live in the now.

[00:20:40] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Yes, absolutely. We know that tomorrow is not promised. It is not promised for health. I'm going to make a point about that. It is not promised for health. It is not promised for anything. You've been a rules follower. Whoever you is, you've been rules followers. And go ahead. Go ahead. Use your 50s.

It is an amazing decade. And it, I think that, that break is also something that will enable you to make the last push. It makes the continuance a little bit easier.

[00:21:13] **Candace Dellacona:** Absolutely. When you think you have a goal in mind that feels very tangible and in the immediate future it allows you that extra burst of energy to continue to push on and create those meaningful experiences. But what about those who have perhaps missed a bit of the window where they're already in the place where they're obligated to the different generations.

How can you carve out those meaningful experiences on a smaller scale? We talked about that recently. Can you share that with us? The example that you used?

[00:21:49] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** The example that I used was my own, and that is that I think we have to take charge of our time. That is probably the most satisfying thing to say my 168 hours a week. Is mine and I'm going to use it intentionally that is fulfilling and while geographically, you may be in a place where you cannot, as I said, you cannot gallivant, you cannot go halfway around the world easily without worrying, you can still do bucket list items by controlling your schedule and I think the work of the 50, that cohort, is to take back the 168. And my example was that last year, while I was in the middle of eight things, I became a tennis tourist. I parked at the Cincinnati Open, my new home in Mason, Ohio, and I parked there for the full week. Probably need some fine tuning for this year because I discovered that only the tennis players get the exercise and that sitting in a tennis stadium is still sitting, but other than the need to fine tune my exercise for the week, oh my gosh, it felt indulgent and it was sunny. And it was rejuvenating, and it was a place of joy. That was a bucket list item for me.

And it, yeah, it didn't involve being unavailable. If anybody had needed me, I could have been there.

[00:23:25] **Candace Dellacona:** So that is the perfect sort of in between. And finding the ability to, as you point out, indulge yourself. And really what we talk about a lot of this podcast is provide yourself with a little bit of self care and have a bit of respite between the generations of caring for each of them, and so you don't necessarily have to have a trip around the world, and some people don't want that anyway.

But I love what you did, and you found the joy in something that you enjoyed, and you didn't have to travel around the world to do it. And, I also think about those listeners who are perhaps not in the greatest place in their lives, and they think about how they can make a change at this point in their life, and I know that you are a big fan of taking control, as you said, even just in terms of the week, but taking control of your life and how to pivot.

[00:24:23] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Absolutely.

[00:24:25] The Forget You Fund and Career Pivots

[00:24:25] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Before I even discuss the pivot and what has become the Forget You Fund, which everybody likes talking about the Yours, Mine, Ours, and Mine money, I want to introduce the word thanatological age. So I say think

thanatologically and remind people who are feeling stuck at 50 that you have enough runway for multiple doublings of your market holdings.

If you haven't saved enough, there's still time and it's worth investing in you. So to wind back to where we started this conversation. If I am 50, my thanatological age is 32 years. I'm going to go to 82. On average. So 50 percent of people will go further. Thanatologically, 32 years. Well, holy Hannah, I mean, where were you 32 years ago?

Where was I 32 years ago? If only the last five years is old age, think of how much runway there is to invest in skills, to invest in health, to invest in money. That's crazy. And if you are healthy at 50 and you expect to go to 65, You get 5 years beyond that. Now we're at 87. You could be looking at 37 years that you have to fill.

Alright, let's carve off the 7. 30 years that you should be doing something, my thought is, invest in yourself, get a hobby. Having said that once we become a family, I find that my women of a certain agency tend to think of all money as family money, and they require permission to do something of their own, and I like to give them permission to have their own kitty.

The notion of a forget you fund, which is spelled F star star K by the way, make no bones about it. The notion is that it's the extra emergency fund. It is a sad truth that there are women who need to get out of a toxic relationship quickly, and they may not have access to shared money. So there should be a separate account in a separate bank that nobody else knows about.

That was the origin of the Forget You Fund. It is also used to give yourself permission to leave a toxic employment, where the culture has changed suddenly and you don't have your next thing lined up. I even know of girlfriend group Forget You Funds, where there's a little kitty that could be shared by the group in the event of an emergency.

But, for a pivot, that Forget You Fund is startup money. And I think it's worth developing that so that at 50, you can start that LLC. Maybe you don't do anything, but you create the entity and the webpage and it sits there for when you need it and you start talking about it. No obligation because we put so much pressure on ourselves, no obligation to have something revenueable.

Maybe it's the Etsy store. I had a client who was a brilliant fiber artist who was underfunded for retirement, just flat out underfunded due to divorce. And she and I agreed that she would take 10 years to build up her fiber arts business. To create just 25,000 dollars. So she's very well paid employee.

She did not need to replace her entire salary. She needed to replace 25,000 dollars and then take that into the first 10 years of retirement. So from 65 to 75, do that thing, which she does anyway, because it's her hobby.

And generate enough income, and of course in the back of my head, I know that, oh, she's not spending down that money.

It's additional income beyond social security, etc. The math is mine. The math is mine. We don't, I don't make anybody do math. But I think it's important that at 50, think about that next thing. Because. If you pay attention to the work at the Stanford Center for Longevity, the 100 year life, we are no longer doing that tri part 20 years education, 40 years work, 30 years retirement.

It's hard for Americans to fund 30 years of retirement. Now we're looking at 35, maybe even 40.

[00:29:15] **Candace Dellacona:** Sure.

[00:29:16] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Get a hobby.

[00:29:18] **Candace Dellacona:** Yeah. In addition to getting a hobby though, I think one of the things that you said, Sherry, that is so important is thinking about what you want and taking that step forward or the step left and progress is not something that generally goes in a straight line. So having to start over in your career or in a relationship is not necessarily a setback and it can actually look like progress.

I love the fact that you have built that in for clients in a way that is attainable and snackable, right? So it doesn't feel like this overwhelming momentous one step forward. You can do it in stages. And what you can do is talk to people like you who can help set out the plan and create the infrastructure so that when you're ready to take the next step, you know exactly how you're going to do it and the F You Fund, the Forget You Fund is really a nice way to have sort of a safety net and allow you to think about living in the now and carve out those meaningful experiences to make sure that you're living the life that you want to live.

[00:30:31] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Yes. Absolutely. And sad truth. Is just this corporate employer rolling layoff thing which burdens, I mean, ageism is a part of it, but it is also part of our current world. I wouldn't call it gig economy, but the notion of having a single employment has gone by the wayside.

[00:31:01] **Candace Dellacona:** Absolutely it has.

[00:31:02] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** And so if you don't have a single employment, why should you have a single career?

[00:31:07] **Candace Dellacona:** I love that.

[00:31:08] Conclusion and Final Thoughts

[00:31:08] **Candace Dellacona:** Sherry, you have given us so much important information to think about today. I think the listeners will really love to look more into Madrina Molly™ and perhaps subscribing and thinking about if they have the guide through life that maybe they need as they operate in this triple decker sandwich generation.

I love that you call us, we're the Boom X generation members because we're sort of, on the cusp of the Boomers, the beginning of the Generation X, we're raising Generation Y, I think, and Millennials, so you've given us so much information today to really think about where we fit in.

[00:31:51] **Sherry Finkel Murphy:** Thank you for having me. It has been my pleasure.

[00:31:55] **Candace Dellacona:** Thanks again, Sherry.