

The need for protection when considering your savings goals

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“Oh gosh, these are George’s children”. The realisation dawned on me as I sat down with the young man and woman I had just met in my role as a Customer Services representative for the life insurance company I was working for. George was a colleague of my father who over the last three years had become a very close family friend to the point that he was a favourite uncle figure, and it had been a huge shock when he had died of a heart attack the week before. We were all struggling to come to terms with how this larger than life figure, a man who had been in the Marines in his earlier life and who had maintained an enviable level of fitness and always sported a beaming smile could have left us so suddenly. George was never far from my mind as I went about my work that week but when the call came in from reception to meet two people that had come in about a claim on their father’s policy, I put my thoughts to one side and prepared to meet customers who were undoubtedly dealing with a loss of their own.

The shock of realising that the people sat in front of me were George’s son and daughter, and that they were dealing with a far greater sense of loss than I, gave way to a ray of hope; they were here because George had a policy with our company! Thank goodness I thought, they - as well as Rose and Mark (George’s second wife and his step son) - will at least not have to worry about money right now because George had had the foresight to take out life insurance. I rushed back to my desk to call up the details of any policies George had and my heart sank as I realized that, while he had indeed planned for the future, this was limited to a retirement saving plan that he had started only a few years before and there was no other life insurance cover in place. I got up and slowly made my way back to give them the details of how to claim this modest amount.

I sometimes think back to that event and imagine George sitting down with his adviser to plan for his retirement. No doubt they talked through where he planned to retire with Rose, and how much of a retirement fund he would need to achieve that, as they worked out what his plan should look like. Why though did they not go that little step further and plan for what would happen if George wasn’t there? George doted on Rose and I am sure that he would have quickly agreed to the benefit of life insurance alongside his saving need. I contrast this with many other interactions I had with people going through some of the most difficult times of their lives but where their deceased loved one had put in place life insurance and other cover to make sure that they were at least financially taken care of. These experiences have taught me to make sure that I have in place coverage to protect those that I love and who depend on me, and given me great pride in the service that my industry can provide.

In the years after George's passing I got married, bought a house and recently I became a father. I wish George had been present for each of these life events but the example that he set and that I think back to has been part of his legacy in my life. The other has been for me to fully appreciate the significance of having robust cover in place to protect the people that I love in case I am not there with them. I have a retirement plan that I hope will allow my wife and I to enjoy a fulfilling retirement together but equally I have life insurance in place to ensure that if I do not reach retirement then she will nonetheless be able to continue with her plans. Similarly as I put in place savings plans to ensure my baby daughter can get a first class university education I am also thinking about how much life, critical illness and disability insurance I need to have in place to achieve this same goal in the event that something happens to me before then. I sincerely hope that it doesn't but I think one of the final lessons that I learned from a great man was that you just never know what could happen and you should prepare for the best of times and the worst of them.

All information contained within this article is correct at the time of publication, March 2017.

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