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## Take charge – understand your finances, manage your advisors

**Carly Doshi:** Hello, and welcome to Women and Wealth, Doing It All. An HSBC Private Banking series by women for women. I'm Carly Doshi and I'm the Head of Philanthropy, Family Governance and Family Office Advisory.

Women on average have a higher life expectancy than men, and yet, as we all know, we continue to earn less. This means we have to be even more mindful of our wealth and managing it over the course of our lifetimes. And this is exactly why we wanted to create this program of podcasts to inspire and empower you to take charge of your wealth and your future. So, with the help of some experts we decided to dive into what this all means. How do successful women manage their wealth, effectively work with their advisors and stay on top of it all while continuing to manage businesses, their families and their other obligations? Each episode you'll hear me engage with HSBC subject matter experts who everyday work with women like you on important financial topics from investing in your future to protecting your finances from divorce, death and disaster, to being part of something that outlives you.

Now, like everything these days, we're recording these podcasts remotely from our respective homes so please accept our apologies in advance for any glitches in sound or background noise.

Today I'm joined by Yasmina Odjo, Senior Relationship Manager working with international clients. Yasmina is here with us to discuss taking charge of your wealth. As an experienced international banker, Yasmina is uniquely well suited to explain to us why it's critical to take an active role in managing your personal wealth, how to find the right advisor for you, and what to do to make the most of that relationship. We'll also touch on some of the key components that make up a robust financial strategy.

Hi Yasmina, thank you for being here with us.

**Yasmina Odjo:** Hi Carly, delighted to be here with you today.

**Carly Doshi:** So, you're a financial advisor who works with individuals and families around the world. You're also a mom with a very busy schedule at home too. Why do you recommend women who are so busy be involved in their personal finance?

**Yasmina Odjo:** Well Carly because to me, it's like investing in yourself and in your future. No matter where you are in your life or financial journey, you have a financial goal. Be it pleasure, for financial security or independence. You want to buy new house, a piece of art. People want to make sure their families are taken care of. And they want to leave a legacy behind or make charitable contributions. So, those goals might be individual or collective family goals but it's important to be involved and take an active role in understanding and managing your finances. Plus, I think historically, women may have had less income or wealth than their male counterparts or may have been less educated when it comes to personal finance. But now they are active wealth creators and start accumulating wealth at an even younger age. So, the sooner you are involved, the better. And if you want your money to work for you and your family, you need to have a seat at the table, contribute to the conversation to ensure that sure your voice is heard, and your vision is taken into consideration.

**Carly Doshi:** Great, that's helpful. Starting at the beginning, you definitely need to have the right advisors in place. How do you find the right one for you?

**Yasmina Odjo:** Right well, first thing's first, let's start with the basics. It may seem obvious, but you want to work with a person who's qualified, that has the right experience and the right credentials to be acting as a financial advisor. And the same goes for the organization they're affiliated with, right? You want to make sure it's a reputable, recognized, well established business that can provide the range of capabilities that you might be looking for. But equally important, pay attention and look for critical attributes like active listening skills, patience, empathy. You want someone who will take the time to get to know you and understand what matters to you, because your advisor will become an advocate for your personal finances, so you need to be able to trust that person. And finally, I'd say, don't forget the smaller things that may sound insignificant at first but can make a meaningful difference. You may want to work with an advisor who has a similar cultural background and values as you do, who speaks the same language, because we sometimes discuss concepts that might be easier to grasp in your home language. Consider someone who has experience working with clients in the same industry or age group as you, or who has similar net worth. These things matter when you're looking to establish a connection with someone who can relate to you and who can give appropriate advice that will also be relevant in the context of your lifestyle.

**Carly Doshi:** Once you've found someone that you have that connection with, what's next?

**Yasmina Odjo:** Well now the real work begins, but that's the exciting part. At this stage, invest in your finances. And allocate the time to reflect on where you are today versus where you want to be, what you want to achieve and when you want to achieve these things, right? So here you have to ask yourself the honest questions, the tough questions sometimes, and then work on a strategy to make it happen. And it's okay not to know how or where to start. An advisor will be there to help guide that reflection and thought process, but it requires

involvement and commitment on your part because we need you to come up with the answers so that we can formulate the solutions.

**Carly Doshi:** **Absolutely.**

**Yasmina Odjo:** And then, educate yourself, ask questions. You need to know and understand your options. The more educated you are, the more engaging the conversations are going to be, and the better the advice. For instance, how involved do you want to be in the management of your assets? Should it be self-directed, or professionally managed? The answer is important because it affects the type of accounts you will open or the fees you might be paying. What about your risk tolerance? How much are you willing to take, or able to take for that matter? How liquid are your investments going to be? So, as you can see, there's a lot of financial jargon out there and we can probably dedicate an entire separate podcast just to cover those actually. But my point here is that even if it seems overwhelming or intimidating at first, don't let that stop you. We work with men and women clients who have various levels of knowledge and comfort and believe me, even our most financially savvy and sophisticated clients have questions.

**Carly Doshi:** Agreed, it is a lot of jargon and we do have a podcast in this series dedicated to breaking down investment terminology. Yasmina, one of the words we hear mentioned a lot is fiduciary. Can you tell us a bit more about what fiduciary means? Is that something to look for in an advisor or not?

**Yasmina Odjo:** Yes, and you're right Carly. This is indeed an important consideration. What that means, is that investment advisors are legally obligated to put their clients' best interest first. So, their recommendation cannot just be suitable for clients, it has to go a step further. This might not be relevant for an investor interested in acquiring shares in a specific company or sector. But in other circumstances it is critical. Think about your retirement accounts or assets held in a trust. A fiduciary must act in your best interests when making investment decisions. And for those accounts, it's incredibly important because you may not have direct access to those sums currently. And the manager must consider your time horizon, the purpose of the account, and several other factors when making decisions. So, in doubt, I'd say if you're not sure about the type of investment account that you have, ask and seek the clarification.

**Carly Doshi:** Moving on a bit. When people say 'finance', we often think that means investing. What about other tools in our financial toolkit, like credit?

**Yasmina Odjo:** That's a very valid point, Carly. Credit is and should be an important part of one's financial strategy and it can be a great tool to amplify your results. You can use lending to your advantage for acquisition purposes. You want to buy a house, a piece of art, some collectibles. Or you can use credit as leverage to magnify your returns and accelerate the realization of certain goals. You may want to increase your investment in a particular asset class, or have more

exposure to this great opportunity you have a high conviction on. So, credit can be a powerful tool in that respect and can help you accumulate wealth faster. However, it also has to be part of a holistic approach and should be used prudently because it can have the opposite effect. It magnifies the positive returns and that's what you want, but it also magnifies the negative returns potentially. So, it adds an element of risk to any strategy. So, you need to make sure you understand these risks and the resulting responsibilities.

**Carly Doshi:** Yasmina, you have many years of experience working directly with women. What advice would you give to someone listening today to help them make the most of their advisor relationship?

**Yasmina Odjo:** Now you're asking the tougher questions, Carly. Well first and foremost, it has to work for you. There's no right or wrong approach to planning and personal finances. What you want is a customized approach. One that matches your goals and values. You want the right team with the right people and the right solutions. So, when you evaluate that relationship, ask yourself that simple question. Is it working for me? Am I getting what I want and what I need? And it's not just about the financial goals or returns here, it also has to work for you from a practical standpoint. So set the rules of engagement early. Set expectations in terms of communication channels, the frequency of those communications. What type of reporting are you expecting? How do you want, or are you supposed to interact with the various team members? That's important because it frames the relationship early on and sets you up on the right foot. But then, the relationship has to also be authentic and transparent and that works both ways by the way. And there there's no magic formula or secret sauce, I think we all have that sixth sense in us. You will know when and if the relationship is genuine, but you want to have that feeling when you're talking to an advisor. And then I'll end by saying this. Invest in your advisor-client relationship, just like any relationship actually. Know what you bring to the table and know what your expectations are and what you want to get out of that relationship. For instance, I work with women whose sole objective is to minimize risk because all they want is to preserve and protect their wealth. They have enough, so need a succession strategy in place for their children or for specific charitable purposes. Others focus on financial security and independence. They need additional income to support their lifestyle or to save for that second home purchase.

**Carly Doshi:** Thank you Yasmina, this is incredibly helpful. To summarize, women should start by getting involved, being clear on their expectations and goals, work with an advisor who they connect with and trust and work holistically with them to achieve their financial objectives. Thanks, Yasmina for being here.

**Yasmina Odjo:** Thank you Carly for having me.

**Carly Doshi:** To our listeners, thank you for joining us. Today's program was part of a series on Women and Wealth, Doing It All by HSBC Private Banking. We sincerely

hope you enjoyed our discussion and found it inspiring, informative and also empowering. Let's keep the conversation going. For more on today's topic and other wealth management and planning solutions, visit us at [hsbcprivatebank.com](https://www.hsbcprivatebank.com) or if you have a Relationship Manager reach out directly to them. Thank you for your time today.