
Simple but Not Easy

A Guide for Helping Investors Overcome
Behavioural Obstacles

MORNINGSTAR®

Welcome, and thanks.

When the markets start dropping, do you get a tinge of fear — followed rapidly by calls from your clients? Do your clients feel envious when they hear that other people's investments are beating theirs? Or, even worse: Do your clients feel disengaged, believing that everything will be fine as they pursue their long-term goals?

For both investors and their advisers, investing is clearly more than a mathematical analysis of risk and return. It's a struggle with ourselves: to tune out irrelevant information, to have the strength to stick to the plan and to resist the urge to follow the herd (except, of course, when they know better than we do). Facing this internal struggle, investors — and their advisers — are often told to avoid the emotional roller coaster and magically remove emotions and temptations from the picture. No problem, right?

We're all human

Over the last decade, a different approach has started to emerge within behavioural science — one that accepts the fact that we're all simply human. We're all imperfect. We have a limited attention span and an unlimited capacity to screw things up.

Behavioural scientists study how our fundamental wiring as human beings drives our behaviour, and how that can undermine our potential to build wealth in the markets over time. Instead of denying our limitations, researchers are learning how we can work with (or around) our human nature to become more informed investors.

Where this guide comes in

This guide is about behavioural science and investing, and how advisers can practically apply that research to their work: to help their clients, and themselves, avoid common pitfalls. We've pulled together research findings from our behavioural science team at Morningstar, along with lessons from other researchers, to walk you through many challenges advisers often face: from assessing client needs and goals to keeping them on track when markets tumble.

Short readings will give you the background information on each topic, and these readings are paired with practical tools that you can use with clients to bring the lessons into the real world.

“Investing is simple, but not easy.” -
Warren Buffett

A long tradition

As we’ve applied behavioural research ourselves at Morningstar, we’ve been struck by the similarities between behavioural research on investor behaviour and a much older tradition in the investing world: the tradition of valuation-driven investing from industry giants like Benjamin Graham and Warren Buffett.

Morningstar was founded by valuation-driven investors, and the same tradition guides our Investment Management Group. We’ve found that classic works like *The Intelligent Investor* focus heavily on the very behavioural obstacles that researchers now study, and many of the solutions that researchers now offer are likewise similar.

It’s for that reason that this guide is titled “Simple but Not Easy” — it’s a famous quote from Warren Buffett on how the basic logic of investing is simple, but our psychology and emotions trip us up. We’ll draw parallels between behavioural science and the older tradition of valuation-driven investment, for which Morningstar is a proud standard-bearer in today’s market.

One final note before we let you dive into the materials themselves. This guide is very much a work in progress — this is the first version, and we would welcome your feedback and suggestions on what to include in the future.

Please feel free to reach out to us anytime at behavioralinsights@morningstar.com. Thank you in advance for your feedback, as we further develop this guide to better serve you.

Steve Wendel
Head of Behavioural Science at Morningstar

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A

Attracting and Educating Potential Clients

Learn more about behavioural science and investing for yourself and your clients.

Why we shoot ourselves in the foot

Which of these should investors do:

- a. Buy low, sell high (i.e., make a profit)
- b. Buy high, sell low (i.e., put your money in a big pile and burn it)

Got your answer to that one? Great, now let's try another one. Please imagine you see a story that's all over the news. Close your eyes for a few seconds. It's about a hot company with an amazing hit product, like the next Apple or Tesla. Should investors:

- a. Check out the company and potentially invest
- b. Ignore the news and invest as before

We all know that "a" is the right answer to the first question. But we're likely to be conflicted about the second question. You know it's a trick, and that "b" is probably the right answer. But "a" feels natural, because words like "all over", "hot", and "hit" — are all positive, and they tell us that lots of other people like the company. We're naturally drawn to things that other people like and find valuable (behavioural scientists call that "social proof").

Unfortunately, investing isn't natural. If other people like an investment, the price goes up. If the price goes up, all things being equal, you're buying high—which is like putting money in a big pile and burning it. Yes, there are many nuances here, like the fact that other people might drive the price up even more after you buy it (aka the "greater fool" theory). But putting aside the nuances for a moment, and our inbuilt temptation to try and outsmart everyone else in the world, that's one small part of the crazy logic of investing.

Who cares?

So, investing is a bit crazy. Why does that matter? It matters because if we do what feels natural, if we don't understand the crazy world of investing, we can lose our money. This doesn't mean that we might "miss out" on a hypothetical future gain we might have had. It could be much more serious than that—it may mean failing to reach our goals.

Investing is fascinating, and it's often exciting and fun. But we can't ignore the dark underside. Investments are always risky, and there's always the chance of losing out. But, one of the big factors that make investments risky is our own behavior as investors. In a study, investors who actively traded stocks in the market made mistakes again and again—and had returns that were one third lower than that of average returns.¹

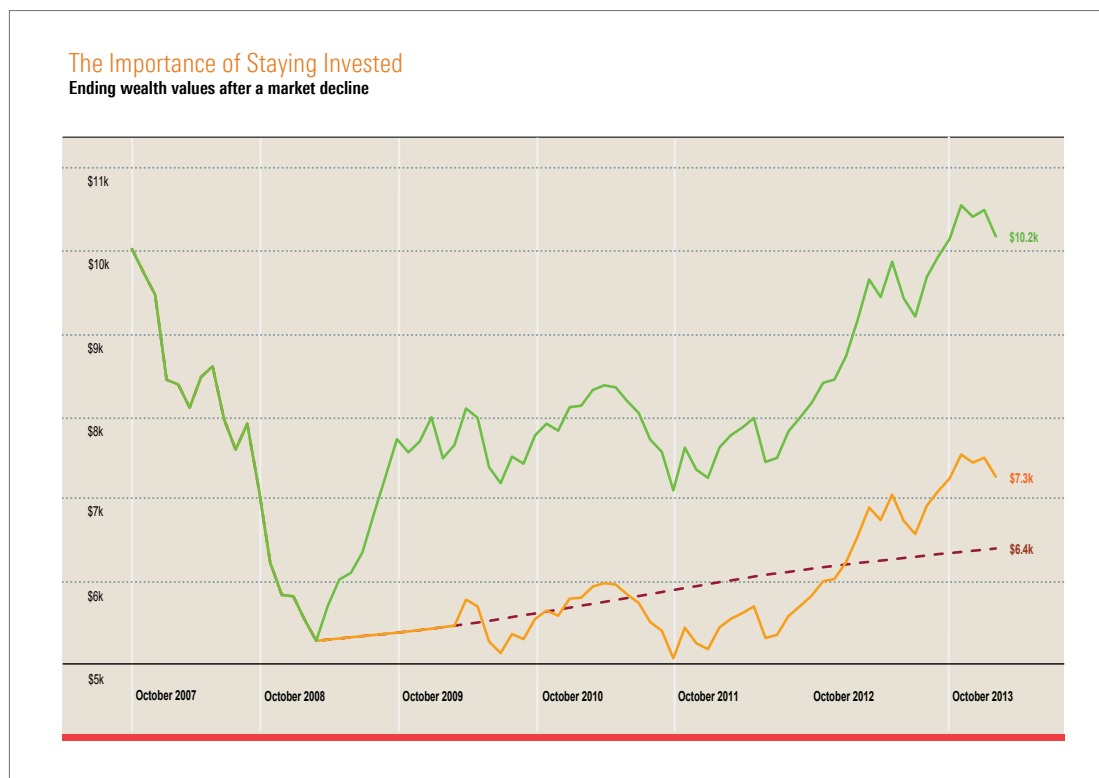
As Benjamin Graham said in the *Intelligent Investor*: "The investor's chief problem — and even his worst enemy — is likely to be himself." So, what actually happens?

What we do wrong

While there are many, many ways in which investors can run into trouble, three types of problems are very common:

- ▶ **Problem #1: Chasing returns.** If you've ever watched programmes like Sky News Business and CNBC or talked with friends about the stock market at a BBQ, you've probably felt the urge to invest in a new hot stock or sector. The problem is this: so does everyone else (like we talked about above).
- ▶ **Problem #2: Exiting the market during downturns.** When the markets get jumpy, people ask themselves (and their advisers), "Is the market going to fall more, and should I get out of the market?" Unfortunately, it's impossible to tell whether a drop in the markets will continue, or whether it will rapidly turn around. The orange line below shows the experience of the investor who exited the Australian stock market at the bottom of the GFC, but then reinvested in stocks a short time (12 months) later. Needless to say, the investor missed a large chunk of the strong recovery that followed. The green line shows the experience of an investor who stayed invested in stocks. The red dotted line shows the experience of an investor who exited the stock market and invested in cash.

Figure 1: Exiting during downturns can seriously impact long-term wealth.²



- ▶ **Problem #3: Picking inappropriate investments.** Investors are inundated with information about investments. It can be overwhelming, so we often go with what feels right. Unfortunately, for complex issues like asset allocation, diversification, and portfolio selection, the details matter, because they help drive long-term growth and determine whether we actually reach our goals.

Dangerous shortcuts

Investors face complex, multifaceted questions. Will markets fall, and for how long? Will these investments rise and fall together? Is the price reasonable? Answering these questions wisely requires a tremendous amount of information. It's more than one person can handle.

So, our minds take shortcuts—which make the task of investing feasible, but introduce mistakes that can end up costing us. Perhaps the simplest and most pernicious shortcut is to copy what other people are doing, but there are many others.

Forcing it to be simple

When faced with overwhelming complexity, our minds often avoid a decision altogether or simplify it to a level we can handle.

- ▶ Avoiding a decision means taking no action until we're forced to—which can be disastrous, for example, when millennials are deciding whether to start investing or not.
- ▶ We often simplify complex choices by focusing on a single piece of data. That's one reason investors appear to underappreciate the importance of investment fees—we focus instead on historical performance or other more exciting attributes.

For example, researchers found that one of the most common “investing strategies” investors use when selecting options in their retirement account is to choose “a little bit of everything.”

Rules of thumb

Another way we simplify complex choices is to use simple rules of thumb to guide us. If there are 10 options, investors might put 10% of their investment in each one—even if one is already well diversified. Famously, Nobel Laureate and modern portfolio theory pioneer Harry Markowitz used that rule of thumb when he made his own selections. Our minds automatically take shortcuts behind the scenes.

If only we knew

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of using these shortcuts—also known as behavioural biases—is that we don't know it's happening. Even when we know, we can't just turn them off.

Why? They are part of the automatic part of our brain, outside of our conscious awareness. The answers they come up with “feel” right to us. We can't avoid using the shortcuts because our minds can't handle the underlying math that some investment decisions require.

So, logically knowing what to do isn't enough. As investors, we're really good at knowing the right thing to do and inconsistent about actually doing it. Thankfully, that's not the end of the story.

1. See Barber, Brad M., and Terrance Odean. "Trading Is Hazardous to Your Wealth: The Common Stock Investment Performance of Individual Investors." *The Journal of Finance* 55, no. 2 (April 1, 2000): 773–806. Their research focused on the boom years of the 1990s, in which a 33% decrease in returns correspond to 6.5 percentage points. Subsequent research has also shown large gaps, in the U.S. and internationally— see Barber, Brad M., and Terrance Odean, "The Behavior of Individual Investors." SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, September 7, 2011.

2. This chart is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not indicative of any specific investment. The image illustrates the value of a \$10,000 investment in the Australian stock market during the period 2007–2014, which included the global financial crisis and the recovery that followed. While recoveries may not all yield the same results, investors are well advised to stick with a long-term approach to investing. Returns and principal invested in stocks are not guaranteed. Stocks have been more volatile than bonds or cash. Holding a portfolio of securities for the long term does not ensure a profitable outcome and investing in securities always involves risk of loss. The market is represented by the S&P/ASX 200 index, which is an unmanaged group of securities and considered to be representative of the Australian stock market in general. Cash is represented by the UBS Bank 0+ Years index. An investment cannot be made directly in an index. The data assumes reinvestment of income and does not account for taxes or transaction costs.

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Investments in securities are subject to investment risk, including the possible loss of principal. Prices of securities may fluctuate from time to time and may even become valueless. Before making any investment decision, you should read and consider all the relevant investment products offering documents and information. You should seriously consider if the investment is suitable for you by referencing your own financial position, investment objectives, and risk profile before making any investment decision or by consulting with your adviser. There can be no assurance that any financial strategy will be successful.

Common investor biases and what to do about them

Many of us are wired to make mistakes in the market, with common errors (or “biases”) like: being overconfident in our ability to pick stocks, focusing unduly on recent returns, and underestimating the power of compound interest. The research on these biases is extensive and spans many decades of work. Here’s a quick summary of the key lessons from this research, which you can use as a starting point for conversations with clients and for further learning.

If there’s one overriding lesson in the research, it’s this: We’re hardwired for these biases, and the most common advice in the investment community—telling investors to just be smart and resist them—is woefully insufficient. Instead, we should look for clever ways to hopefully avoid or short-circuit these biases.

Overconfidence Bias

WHAT IS IT: Being overly optimistic about one’s likelihood of success. For example, investors often falsely believe they can select investments better than others and can outperform the market.

HOW TO TACKLE IT: Educating investors about the prevalence of overconfidence appears to be effective. That means not telling an investor that he/she is being overconfident, but instead educating him/her about the fact that all investors tend to be overconfident. Note: If an investor is overconfident about having enough money for retirement, see the “present bias” entry for other interventions.

Confirmation Bias

WHAT IS IT: Subtly seeking out and paying more attention to information that supports one’s viewpoint. For example, confirmation bias would be believing that a particular company or sector will do well in the future, and then “finding” information online that agrees.

HOW TO TACKLE IT: Ask the investor to list reasons that others might give against their viewpoint (i.e. to carefully think through an opposing viewpoint). Another technique is called “prospective hindsight”, in which you ask investors to imagine a future in which they learn that they were wrong, then ask them to explain why that happened.

Recency Bias (related: Representativeness Bias)

WHAT IS IT: Focusing unduly on recent events and using them to judge the future. For example, believing that an investment’s recent stellar performance means it will do well in the future.

HOW TO TACKLE IT: Show the investor vivid, powerful examples of when buying after stellar performance led to disaster, like the run up to the 2008 bust. Statistics alone aren’t enough; the more vivid and easy to remember the example, the better. In addition, you can arm investors with an alternative way to interpret past performance with easy-to-remember rules. For example, “when prices go up, the opportunity to profit usually goes down,” or “the danger of losing money usually goes up as prices rise.”

Disposition Effect

WHAT IS IT: Holding onto investments that have lost relative value for too long to avoid the regret of having made a bad decision, or selling stocks too early that gain in price. This is related to loss aversion: our overweighting and fear of losses relative to gains.

HOW TO TACKLE IT: Set guidelines for when to sell before investors are caught up in the emotions of regret and fear.

Present Bias

WHAT IS IT: Not taking future needs seriously enough and focusing on the present instead. For example, not putting aside enough for one's investments to have a comfortable retirement.

HOW TO TACKLE IT: As an adviser, you can ask investors to list each of their likely expenses in retirement, and prompt them for ones that are missing. For many investors, the amount they'll need is surprising, and it makes the future more real. Another technique is to try to make retirement more vivid and real for the individual with age-progressed images of their faces, detailed descriptions of where the investor would like to live, and so forth. In addition, you can ask clients to pre-commit to saving more when they receive their next raise or bonus.

Choice Paralysis

WHAT IS IT: Becoming overwhelmed with the complexity of a decision, and avoiding it or putting it off. For example, when investors are faced with a complex menu of super/pension investments, some will become paralyzed by the daunting decision. Ironically, investors often ask for more complexity and a wealth of options, but often falter when actually confronted with them, which is known as the "paradox of choice".

HOW TO TACKLE IT: You have two main options as an adviser. You can try to remove the complexity altogether—by reducing the number of options or data points about the investments. However, that can turn off your more savvy investors. Alternatively, you can make complexity easier to manage by providing a quick and easy summary for those who need it (with two simple "preferred options" to choose from, for example), and supplying the details in appendixes or online resources for those who want it.

There are dozens of such biases that researchers have identified, but these six cover many common scenarios and are a great place to start. Check the appendix for resources where you can learn more.

Three ways to do better

How can investors overcome these challenges? The key is to remember that it's how we're wired. Everyone — no matter how smart you are.

We can't overcome these problems by force of will; instead, we have to remove our human frailties from the equation, or put tremendous time and energy into avoiding these mistakes.

Here are three basic strategies for avoiding these common mistakes.

1. Dedicate your entire life to investing (and psychology)

Great valuation-driven investors (Buffett, Munger, Graham, etc.) show that this is possible. But these people not only dedicate their lives to it: they hire teams of others, gather extensive data, and buy expensive software.

If you'd like to go down that route—great! But if you just want to dabble, don't even think about it. Watching the news or reading the papers give us the illusion of special insight or information—but we'll usually be crushed by people who devote their lives to the process.

2. Partner with professionals

Many investors realise the limitations they face and turn to professional advisers for help. Advisers typically use software to simplify investment analysis and avoid common mistakes (or partner with professional investment management companies) and study investor psychology to help investors overcome the challenges we've talked about.

3. Keep it simple and use autopilot

Our minds will take shortcuts, no matter what we do. One way to avoid this is to stop thinking—and go with simple investments that you may never need to touch again. Many retirement plans do this—they help make saving and investing in appropriate vehicles automatic. That's also what some online apps try to do as well.

This autopilot, though, contains two challenges. First, if investors overreact during market volatility and change or remove their investments, it's meaningless. Second, autopilots don't consider whether investors really need to re-engage—like when participants in a retirement plan change jobs.

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Our Investment Management Group's approach

Nobody is immune from the curse of investment biases, not even the authors of this guide. Investing isn't easy. Morningstar's Investment Management Group³ (the people who dedicate their lives to the process) have devised a set of investment principles to help stay on track. The principles combine valuation-driven investing with lessons from behavioural science.

We thought we'd share them with you to explain one of the ways the Investment Management Group applies this research in their own efforts. Hopefully this can also inform your own efforts to overcome behavioural obstacles and invest wisely.



We put investors first. We believe when a firm puts investors first, they win in the long term because their investors are more likely to win.

WHY IT MATTERS: Financial services companies that allow conflicts of interest to hijack their actions do not have investors' best interests in mind.

We employ behavioural research to reinforce our commitments and help ensure we're following through. We also align some of our portfolio managers' incentives with the long-term performance (after fees) that investors experience.



We're independent-minded. To deliver results, we think it's necessary to pursue our research conclusions, investing with conviction even when it means standing apart from the crowd.

WHY IT MATTERS: Herding is commonplace in investing. It generally delivers average results in normal times and can drive destructive booms and busts. Meeting your investment goals may often mean acting independently from the herd.

Our Investment Management Group watches what other investors are doing in the market and checks to see if our investment decisions are too similar—if they are, we may need to course-correct.



We invest for the long term. Taking a patient, long-term view helps people ride out the market's ups and downs and take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

WHY IT MATTERS: Investors often overemphasise the importance of recent events, rushing into hot stocks when they're overpriced and fleeing from market downturns. Investors can fight this common error by focusing on long-term lessons and long-term performance.

Our Investment Management Group concentrates on fundamental, long-term value drivers, selecting investments we believe we can and should hold for the long haul, then measuring how long we hold them in practice.

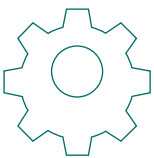
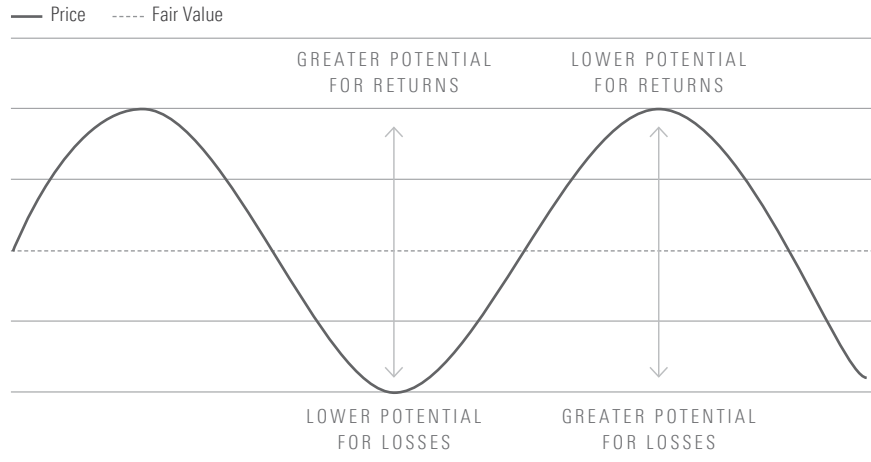


We're valuation-driven investors. Anchoring decisions to an investment's fair value—or what it's really worth—can lead to greater potential for returns.

WHY IT MATTERS: Our minds are hard-wired to find patterns in everything, but much of the market's daily volatility is just meaningless noise. Researchers have found that in the long term, the underlying value of a company, relative to its price, drives performance.⁴

Our Investment Management Group assesses investments on the relationship between current price and intrinsic value, to help minimise the cognitive impact of short-term fads and noise. For example, instead of talking about a price going down (which can trigger herd behaviour), we talk about expected returns going up.

Figure 2: An image we use at Morningstar to think about expected returns, and to reframe price volatility as a good thing.



We take a fundamental approach. Powerful research is behind each decision we make, and we understand what drives each investment we select.

WHY IT MATTERS: Researchers find that investors base decisions on dangerous shortcuts: from the spelling of fund managers' names, to whether friends have mentioned a particular company before. Investors use these meaningless characteristics to judge whether an investment is worthy and then concoct convincing stories about why these investments are good, and subtly seek out data that confirms those conclusions.

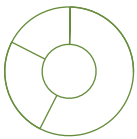
Our Investment Management Group structures our analysis around the fundamental characteristics of each company, including its cash flow, balance sheet, and potential for a sustainable competitive advantage—to keep our focus on facts that really matter.



We strive to minimise costs. Controlling costs helps investors build wealth by keeping more of what they earn.

WHY IT MATTERS: Investors face a barrage of information, and our minds tend to focus on one or two narrow characteristics. So, investment companies rarely highlight their fees to avoid investor scrutiny. But, while returns are volatile and uncertain, fees aren't: they will eat away at an investor's money.

Total fees to the investor are a key consideration as part of our portfolio construction process – be it management fees, taxes or transaction costs. Whilst we may not always be the lowest cost provider, we remain committed to charging clients fair and reasonable fees for our services.



We build portfolios holistically. To help manage risk and deliver better returns, we combine investments with different underlying drivers into truly diversified portfolios.

WHY IT MATTERS: Our minds like compelling stories—stories about companies, strategies, and managers. These stories can help us tune out overwhelming details and make us more comfortable. Diversification, or the careful selection of a range of investments that aim to minimise risk, is rather boring by comparison.

Our Investment Management Group embraces diversification. By taking the story out of the equation, we can create portfolios designed to lower risk for individual investors.

Wrap up

Morningstar's Investment Management Group uses these principles to keep their investment management on track—to serve investors for the long term and overcome common behavioural obstacles along the way. They, like anything else, aren't perfect. But hopefully the behavioural research behind them can help inform the development of your investment principles as you pursue your goals.

3. Morningstar's Investment Management Group includes subsidiaries of Morningstar, Inc. that are authorised in the appropriate jurisdiction to provide consulting or advisory services in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa.

4. Kinniry, F. M., Colleen M. Jaconetti, Michael A. DiJoseph, and Yan Zilbering. "Putting a Value on Your Value: Quantifying Vanguard Advisor's Alpha." The Vanguard Group (2014). Available at <http://www.vanguard.com/pdf/ISGQVAA.pdf>.

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B

Assessing Client Needs

Resources for talking with clients about their overall financial picture and their financial "personality".

What to expect

You've started working with an adviser to chart your financial journey. It's a long and personal relationship, and for the process to work, you should know what to expect.

Your adviser's role

Your adviser is like a personal trainer: helping you develop a plan, forming good habits, and coaching you when you struggle. To this end, your adviser should:

- ▶ Work to understand the current state of your finances and your personal goals.
- ▶ Develop an investment plan that meets your long-term goals.
- ▶ Regularly check in and make adjustments to your plan when needed.

Another key part of an adviser's (and personal trainer's) role is to be a behavioural coach. That means helping you navigate the investment challenges you might face from downturns in the market to lifestyle or personal changes that affect your finances.

Your adviser will be there to keep you updated on your progress, adjust your plan when necessary, and coach you every step of the way. In fact, according to a recent study by Vanguard⁵, the coaching process is remarkably important—driving, in strict performance terms, increased returns of up to 1.5% more than not using an adviser.

Your role as an investor

To help your adviser develop an effective plan for you, you should be as transparent as possible. The relationship should be deep and honest. To start the process off, you'll discuss:

- ▶ Your personal goals, and what that means for your finances.
- ▶ Your willingness to take investment risks, also known as your "risk tolerance".
- ▶ How long you hope to invest before you reach the goals you're aiming for, as well as what you expect to achieve.

You should also let your adviser know how often you'd like to keep in touch. Regular updates can help you maintain the direction and discipline you need to reach your financial goals.

Morningstar's role

You've probably noticed that this guide was developed by Morningstar to support your adviser. Morningstar's Investment Management Group's experienced team of investment managers and researchers may also support your adviser with specialised analyses and investment portfolios⁶. Your adviser turns to Morningstar and its Investment Management Group for investment tools, products and independent research to help guide his or her recommendations, clearly communicate how to aim for better results, and help you meet your goals.

5. Bennyhoff, Donald G., and Francis M. Kinniry Jr. "Advisor's Alpha." Vanguard research paper (2013).

Available at <https://personal.vanguard.com/pdf/icraa.pdf>.

6. Morningstar® Managed PortfoliosSM are offered by the entities within Morningstar's Investment Management Group, which includes subsidiaries of Morningstar, Inc. that are authorized in the appropriate jurisdiction to provide consulting or advisory services in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa. In Australia, Morningstar Managed Portfolios are offered by Morningstar Investment Management Australia Limited (ABN 54 071 808 501, AFS Licence No. 228986).

A holistic view of goals and finances

As your adviser works with you to plan your investment strategy, he or she will naturally talk with you about your overall financial picture and long-term goals. It's more than just a nice conversation—it's part of a systematic approach to helping you meet those goals. Here are two key elements of holistic planning: goals-based investing and the total wealth approach.

Goals-based investing

It's all too common for investors to have financial goals, but no real plan to achieve them. This problem is compounded when goals (such as retirement savings, university fees, weddings, travel, or paying off loans) overlap or even conflict.

Advisers can use goals-based planning to help you prioritise goals and find the best way to reach them. Rather than simply investing for its own sake, goals-based investing gives you something concrete and meaningful to strive for. It helps you connect your investments to what really matters: your family, your future experiences, and your personal needs.

Your adviser can use goals-based planning to help you think about not only your risk tolerance, but also your "risk capacity"—the amount of risk you should take to best meet your goals.

Total Wealth Approach

Your investments, such as your super/pension savings or investment accounts, are only one part of your total wealth. A total wealth approach looks at your big picture: your financial capital, human capital, pension wealth, housing wealth, partner's wealth, job, age, location, family situation, and other personal circumstances. Using a total wealth approach helps advisers more accurately determine what you'll need to save to meet your goals.

This approach can help your adviser better plan for your future. For example, a tenured professor is less prone to experience a layoff and more likely to have guaranteed retirement income. A trader at an investment bank or a professional football player are both more likely to lose their jobs at a relatively young age—and need to save and invest in other ways to compensate. The clearer the overall picture, the better your adviser can look out for potential problems and build a holistic plan for you.

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Understanding the total financial picture

This worksheet will help you and your adviser get a holistic view of your finances.

How it works

We all know the simple cashflow budgeting model: **Income-Expenses = Savings**.

Likewise, we know how to calculate net worth: **Assets-Liabilities = Net Worth**.

However, many people don't learn how to connect the two concepts in a way that helps them to see how their monthly savings (or debt accrual) adds or subtracts from their net worth over time.

When we only deal with numbers on balance sheets, we see how we are spending, but we do not address why we make the choices we do.

To help you and your adviser see the bigger picture of your finances, you'll connect the concepts of economics with their underlying personal motivations. We do this with the Personal Economy Worksheet.

The key idea is to look beyond the numbers, and understand how each person has their own "personal economy". The concept of a personal economy is based on how someone uses their resources to meet their needs.

There are three types of income-producing resources in your personal economy: land, labour, and capital. Taking stock of them will not only help calculate your net worth, but also show what resources you may be able to leverage to increase your income potential. On the other side, every expense or liability can be mapped to a human need. Some of these needs are obvious (a car meets a physical need) but others might be more subtle (the same car might meet some emotional needs as well).

A better way to find money to save and invest

When people want to increase saving, they often begin by trying to cut expenses. By first identifying the underlying needs each expense meets, you can better decide how to meet the same needs with less-expensive strategies.

For example, if someone is spending excessively on luxury clothing or personal products, removing this completely might threaten their needs for comfort, relaxation, and self-expression. Finding other outlets for these emotional needs is important, or the person won't stick to the plan.

The next page has a sample worksheet, so you can see how it works. Check the associated materials with this guide for a blank version of the worksheet.

How to use the Personal Economy Worksheets

1. First, map out what you know: income and expenses. What do you spend money on each month, and where do you currently receive money? That's how money flows through your life.

2. Second, think about why you earn that income, and why you spend money on those things. What are the underlying resources and needs that drive each of them?

In terms of resources, map out what generates your income, and what do you have that could generate income in the future?

An easy way to categorise resources is to think about them in three areas: **labour** (your skills and your effort, which generate things like salaries, bonuses, and even spousal support), **land** (your house, separate rental properties, etc.), and **capital** (financial assets, cars, physical possessions, specialised tools and machinery).

In terms of needs, map out the benefits you get from your purchases, or the needs you are trying to fulfill. There are many systems for thinking about one's needs (like Maslow's Hierarchy), but a nice and nearly comprehensive one is to think about **survival, security, emotional wellness, esteem, self-actualization** and **spiritual needs**.

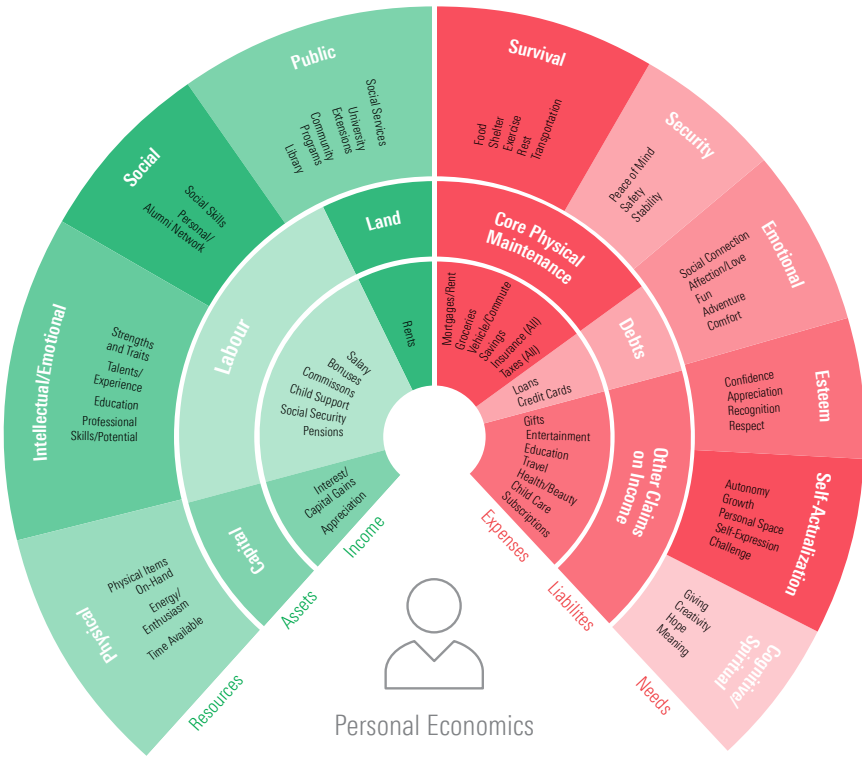
Categorising these needs is not a judgment of their worth. We're not separating items into "real needs" and "frivolous wants;" instead, we're accepting that there's probably a reason we spend money the way we do.

Resources and needs are what causes money to flow through your life. They aren't strange external forces; they are under your control.

3. If you aren't meeting your financial goals, then we have two tools you can use.

- a. You can find other strategies to meet your needs. For example, other things you can do or buy to provide shelter, happiness, etc. for you and your family. That might be meeting a need for entertainment by spending a week hiking with friends instead of going on an expensive cruise.
- b. You can find other ways to generate income from your resources. For example, renting out specialised tools and machinery, employing an underutilised skill at your current job or a new one, or over time switching to less expensive cars or homes.

Personal Economy Worksheet



Assessing a client's financial type

How it Works

Several psychological factors affect financial decision-making. The Financial Personality Matrix combines three of the most influential aspects into one easy-to-use framework.

With the Financial Personality Matrix, the answers to five simple questions can help you to understand your clients' underlying financial psychology. The results can help you provide personalised advice that targets each client's strengths and weaknesses and helps train them toward healthier financial attitudes and behaviours over time.

FACTOR ONE: Time perception

We all hate to wait, but some people actually experience time delays as being longer and more painful than others. A person's "mental time horizon" (as opposed to their financial time horizon) will have a large impact on how patient they are, and it can even predict whether they are at risk for high debt/income ratios.

Impatient people feel time delays as more painful, and they have higher discount rates than their more-patient peers. Additionally, people who think farther into the future and picture the future using clear and detailed mental imagery tend to display more patient financial decisions.

FACTOR TWO: Locus of control

Is your life determined by fate, a higher power, or chance? Do you believe that you create your own destiny? A person's locus (centre) of control refers to their beliefs about how much control they have over their lives. A person with an external locus of control believes that forces outside themselves determine the course of their life. A person with an internal locus of control believes that he or she is responsible for creating their own destiny.

Locus of control has been shown to correlate with many behavioural factors, and it may even determine the emotional experience clients have when dealing with their money. Preliminary research at HelloWallet in 2015⁷ showed that, regardless of income, people with an internal locus of control felt more peaceful and satisfied with their money, while those with an external locus of control had higher levels of anxiety and stress related to their finances.

FACTOR THREE: Emotional drivers

The emotional meanings we associate with money can have a profound impact on our spending and saving choices. To some, the idea of great wealth inspires feelings of excitement, desire, and even lust. Others may find great wealth threatening to their way of life, and fear that they will become a target for the hostile envy or greed of others. Anxiety can lead people to hoard or hide wealth, and rob them of the ability to enjoy what they have. Beyond these extreme emotional responses is the feeling of peace and stability that can be achieved when one's financial life is in good order. Stability motives do not arise from fear, but from a balanced desire to maintain financial security while enjoying the pleasures of wealth in moderation.

7. HelloWallet is a personal finance company that develops online applications to help people save for the future and manage their money. Morningstar acquired HelloWallet in 2014.

Survey for clients

1. Please mark on the line below how long a 1-year wait feels to you.

⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
EXTREMELY SHORT EXTREMELY LONG

2. When you think of your life 10 years from now, how clear and detailed is your mental picture?

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
EXTREMELY VAGUE AND WITHOUT DETAIL EXTREMELY CLEAR AND VERY DETAILED

3. How far ahead do you tend to think and plan?

- ① Less than a month
 - ② 1-6 months
 - ③ 6 months to a year
 - ④ 1-5 years
 - ⑤ 5-10 years
 - ⑥ 10 years or more
-

4. Please mark the answer which is closest to your personal feelings about your financial life.

- ① I create my own financial destiny.
 - ② My financial life is mostly in my control, but chance/God/other people play a small part.
 - ③ I play a small role in my financial life, but chance/God/other people play a larger part.
 - ④ I have little to no impact on my financial life.
-

5. Which of the following do you most strongly associate with wealth?

- ① Opportunity, fun, freedom, excitement, luxury, etc.
- ② Security (Peace of mind, safety, long-term stability)
- ③ Vulnerability (Being a target for fraud, scams, or the judgment of others)

Interpreting the results (Scoring)

Mental Time Horizon

Question 1:

Score on a reverse scale of 5-1 (5 = Extremely short, 1 = Extremely Long)

Question 2:

Score on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Extremely vague and without detail, 5 = Extremely clear and detailed)

Question 3:

Score on a scale of 1-6 (1 = Less than a month, 6 = 10 + years)

Add up the total scores for questions 1-3. Answers will range from 1 to 16.

Scores between 1 and 8 = Short-term focus (Bottom half of the matrix)

Scores between 9 and 16 = Long-term focus (Top half of the matrix)

Locus of Control

Question 4:

If they answered (a) or (b), they have an internal locus of control (left-hand side of the matrix).

Answers (c) or (d) indicate an external locus of control (right-hand side of the matrix).

The combination of time horizon and locus of control will place each client in one of the four quadrants. For example, someone with an external locus of control with a short-term focus would be in Quadrant D.

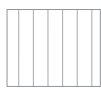
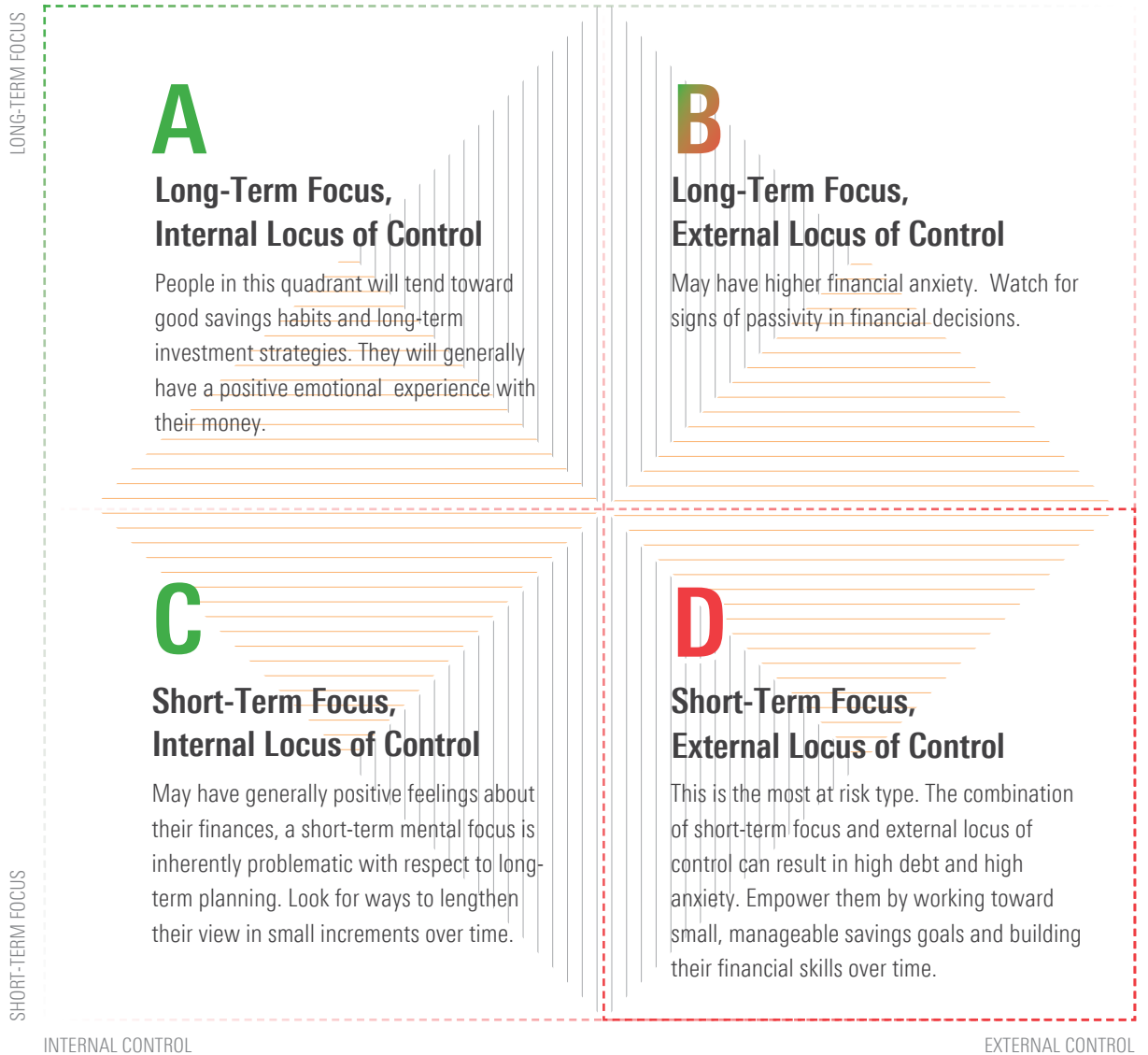
Emotional Motivation

Question 5:

Within the quadrant indicated by the answers above, circle the emotional subtype as follows:

If they answered A: Desire driven, B = Stability driven, C = Fear driven.

Financial personality matrix



Desire Driven: People with a desire-driven personality are excited by the pleasures, luxuries, and experiences that money can buy. They tend to equate material possessions with personal success, and so they enjoy and admire shows of wealth. People in this sub-type can be at risk for over-spending. It is important to help desire-motivated people identify ways they can enjoy themselves and gain esteem while keeping spending within their means.



Fear Driven: People who are driven by fear can have high financial anxiety. They may anticipate worst-case scenarios or consistently ask 'what if'? While it is wise to be prepared for the unexpected, extremely fear-driven individuals can miss out on the enjoyment of their wealth. Help clients with this tendency by offering examples of how good planning and decision-making can reduce the risk of their worst-case scenarios coming to pass.



Stability Driven: Those who did not score high on the fear or desire subscales are at lower risk for financial mismanagement arising from emotional motivations.

C

Analyzing and Planning

Extra tools to assist your analysis and planning efforts — like helping clients commit to an agreed-upon plan.

Letter to your future self

How it works

Commitments can be hard to keep. However, some promising research shows that we can help ourselves to follow through using what are known as commitment devices. When it comes to market volatility, we can have every intention to stay the course, yet we find ourselves abandoning our investment strategy when fear and panic set in.

To combat this natural tendency, you and your adviser can agree to write yourself a letter. This letter is a simple promise, made when emotions are stable, to remember the commitment to hold steady. You can simply sign the prewritten letter below, or write a personalised version.

When the market takes a severe downturn, your adviser will email or hand you a copy of this letter as a reminder of your personal commitment.

The Personal Commitment Letter

To my future self,

I know you want to move your money right now. The market is going crazy. I am writing to remind you that even though it is tempting, what you really want to do is stay the course.

You have planned well, and you can handle the storm. Remember how you felt when you sat down with _____ and talked about the reasons for choosing your strategy.

Ride it out.

Sincerely,

Date _____

Investments in securities are subject to investment risk, including the possible loss of principal. Prices of securities may fluctuate from time to time and may even become valueless. Before making any investment decision, you should read and consider all the relevant investment products offering documents and information. You should seriously consider if the investment is suitable for you by referencing your own financial position, investment objectives, and risk profile before making any investment decision or by consulting with your adviser. There can be no assurance that any financial strategy will be successful.

D

Checking in and Responding to Requests

Tools to help you navigate ongoing interactions with clients once they are on a path.

Special situations guide

Conflicting priorities within couples

Conflicts over money are consistently named as a primary reason for divorce. With this in mind, it's not hard to see how you as a financial adviser can be of great value to couples: by helping them to communicate more effectively about financial matters.

While some issues may be best resolved in the privacy of a marriage counsellor's office, bear in mind that marriage counsellors may just leave the financial arguments to you as their adviser.

Every couple is different, and the issues that trigger conflict will be unique. However, there is some general advice that you can offer couples that may help them to make their arguments over money more productive and less destructive.

Focus on the need, not the strategy

Financial conflicts are generally about behaviour; what one party did or did not do with regards to money. However, according to conflict-management expert Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, everything we do is an attempt to meet a fundamental human need. We all share the same set of needs, so while we may find ourselves baffled by our partner's behaviour, we will be able to understand their needs. By learning to communicate about needs rather than behaviour, couples can learn to devise strategies that meet the needs of both people.

For example, if one person is a spender and the other is a saver, each may associate money with different fundamental needs. The spender may see money as a means to experience fun, excitement, comfort, or pleasure. The saver may see money as a means to meet their need for safety, security, and peace of mind. The more the spender meets his or her need for fun, the more the saver feels their need for security threatened, and vice versa. If this couple can learn to talk about the needs they each are meeting with their behaviour (freedom vs. security), rather than the strategy (spending vs. saving), they may be able to find a strategy that satisfies both people.

Things Humans Need to Feel Satisfied (A Partial List)

Survival	Food	Sex	Transportation
	Exercise	Shelter	Rest
Security	Peace	Stability	Safety
Emotional	Acceptance	Fun	Friendship
	Adventure	Intimacy	To Matter
	Affection	Love	Respect
	Appreciation	Nurturing (self or others)	Communication
	Belonging	Recognition	
Self-Actualization	Challenge	Independence	Self-Expression
	Giving	Personal Space	Growth
Cognitive/Spiritual	Awareness	Hope	Discovery
	Creativity	Meaning	Purpose

Our fundamental needs are constant. The list above is not exhaustive but can serve as a starting ground for conversation.⁸ Use this chart to help clients identify the need that they may be meeting with a particular financial behaviour. Needs do not change, but strategies are flexible. Once the underlying need is identified, the person or couple can begin to think of other strategies that might meet the same need without violating the needs of the other person.

More on Dr. Rosenberg's work, as well as books and tools for conflict management using his theory can be found at the Center for Nonviolent Communication, www.cnvc.org.

Handling sudden wealth

A client's core beliefs about money play a large role in how the person adapts to sudden wealth. When a person or family receives a large windfall, they are like immigrants arriving in a new land. There is a new culture to navigate, with new rules to learn, and even a new form of language.

Findings from cross-cultural psychology have identified three ways people respond: Avoidance, Assimilation, and Integration. This worksheet will help you understand how a particular client may be responding to newfound wealth, and how to help them navigate the process. It covers two different ways for you to assess how people respond: through their enduring beliefs about money, and how they respond to money in the moment.

8. This excerpt is from Sarah Newcomb's book, *LOADED: Money, psychology, and how to get ahead without leaving your values behind*, Wiley, 2016.

Sudden wealth assessment worksheet

RISK FACTOR 1: Core Beliefs

Circle the number that reflects how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Completely DISAGREE		Neither		Completely AGREE
I want people to know that I am wealthy.	1	2	3	4	5
Money corrupts people.	5	4	3	2	1
Wealth is a good indicator of success.	1	2	3	4	5
Having wealth will make me a target for scams, fraud, or loans.	5	4	3	2	1
I want to enjoy all the benefits and luxuries that wealth affords me.	1	2	3	4	5
I sometimes wish I did not have as much money as I do.	5	4	3	2	1

Results: Add up the circled numbers and refer to the following guide:
(5-15) **Avoidance** (16-19) **Integration** (20-30) **Assimilation**

RISK FACTOR 2: Emotional Response

When you think about your wealth, how often do you experience the following emotions?

	Almost NEVER		Half the time		Almost ALWAYS
Anxiety					
Numbness					
Excitement					
Elation					
Peaceful					
Secure					

Results:

- ▶ **Fear:** People who report feeling Anxiety and/or Numbness more than half the time are likely experiencing a fear-based reaction to their wealth. This puts them at a higher risk for **avoidant** behaviours.
- ▶ **Desire:** Those who report feeling Excitement and/or Elation when they think about their wealth may be at higher risk for overspending. This puts them at higher risk for **assimilation**.
- ▶ **Stability:** People who report feeling Peaceful and/or Secure more than half the time are likely to adapt well to their wealth without damaging emotional responses. They may **integrate** well without much coaching.

How to use this information

The three strategies are not mutually exclusive. You may find your clients moving in and out of each strategy over time. Ideally, you will help them settle into a life where the parts of their past that they value most are well integrated with the parts of their new life that bring them joy and security.

Advising Avoiders:

People with one or more avoidance risk factors may need your help to adjust to their new situation. The things that help avoiders are the same things that help people with anxiety. Challenge avoiders to spend a bit more in order to see that the land of wealth may, in fact, be a safer place than they believe. Help them to feel secure by indulging their “What if?” scenarios and teaching them to see that even if some things go wrong, they can still be all right. Avoiders will often try to hide their wealth from friends, and even from their children. Help them to understand that their children need to learn how to manage large assets as early on as possible or they will not have the skills they need when their parents pass on.

Advising Assimilators:

Assimilators need to learn to enjoy the benefits of wealth while exercising moderation. By helping them to see how their net worth translates to a monthly/annual income stream, they may be able to learn the value of saving even as they adapt to a more luxurious lifestyle. Assimilators may hide their spending from you — they may be a challenge to coach, and ignore your warnings. Showing them examples of the cost of overspending/taking on too much risk may be useful motivators.

Advising Integrators:

The goal is that all clients who experience a large windfall will eventually integrate their new wealth into their lives in a healthy and balanced way. Overall, integrators will be the easiest to work with. They will be focused on how to maintain and protect their wealth for themselves and their legacy. Help them to go even further by including their children in their financial decisions so that they can be assured that the next generation will be well equipped to manage their wealth for years to come.

For more information, see Dr. James Grubman’s book, *Strangers in Paradise: How Families Adapt to Wealth Across Generations* and the Sudden Money Institute.

Quick response table

What to do if...

You're getting to know a new or potential client

- ▶ Review the Financial Type Assessment Worksheet and "Why we shoot ourselves in the foot".
- ▶ Use the Financial Type Assessment and Personal Economy Worksheet.
- ▶ Share the "What To Expect" document and ask the client to commit to their chosen strategy.

Markets are dropping...and a client has called you, curious

- ▶ Have the client read "Why we shoot ourselves in the foot".
- ▶ Reiterate the core lessons of behavioural finance (and valuation-driven investing): many people run away from falling markets, and because of that, it presents an opportunity for profit.

Markets are dropping...and a client has called you, panicked

- ▶ Have the client commit to (sign) their long-term strategy with the "Letter to your future self", and read "Why we shoot ourselves in the foot".
- ▶ Remind the client of their prior commitment to long-term investing, preferably with the signed commitment; in addition, remind the client of the general psychology of investing (not about them personally, but about all investors) in "Why we shoot ourselves in the foot".

Markets are dropping...and a client hasn't called, but you want to know whether to be proactive

- ▶ Get information and your response ready, but don't assume they are panicked — people close to the industry feel volatility much more, and faster, than people outside of the industry.

It's been too many months since you last spoke with the client

- ▶ Set up a regular check-in schedule with the "What to Expect" document.
- ▶ Show the work you're doing behind the scenes; unfortunately out of sight does mean out of mind. Send out a note asking about life events, and checking if goals and financial picture should be updated.

Your client passes away and a family member inherits estate

- ▶ Prepare beforehand by including family members in the planning process; separately interview members with the primary contact there to assess goals and needs one on one.
- ▶ See the "Special Situations Guide" in this guide. After the condolence period, review plans and goals with the estateholder (to demonstrate depth of process the deceased went through).

Client inherits significant estate or receives financial windfall

- ▶ See the "Special Situations Guide" in this guide; beware of framing new wealth as a windfall — instead, focus on how to meet existing goals in an accelerated fashion

E

Appendix: Resources to Learn More

Appendix: Resources to learn more

Are you enticed by what you've read here and want to learn more about behavioural science and investor behaviour—or the older, related, tradition of valuation-driven investing? There's a lot you can draw from, both to educate yourself and your clients. Here are a few suggestions to get started.

Figure 3: One of Carl Richards's simple, straightforward drawings about investor behaviour (and the pitfalls therein)



On behavioural science and investor behaviour

This guide is designed for practical use by advisers. To learn more about the underlying research, check out:

- ▶ *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, by Daniel Kahneman
- ▶ *Nudge*, by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein
- ▶ *What Investors Really Want*, by Meir Statman
- ▶ *The Little Book of Behavioural Investing*, by James Montier
- ▶ *Investor Behavior: The Psychology of Financial Planning and Investing*, by H. Kent Baker and Victor Ricciardi

Carl Richards's sketches also nicely summarise many of the core challenges investors face; you can check them out in *Morningstar* magazine, or in his book *The Behavior Gap*.

On valuation-driven investing

At its core, valuation-driven investing is simple: find the fair value of an investment, and only buy it if the price is sufficiently below that fair value to provide a margin of safety against error. Sell it if the price is significantly above the fair value of the investment.

But as valuation-driven investor Warren Buffett said: Investing is simple, but not easy. The investor biases discussed in this guide, including our overconfidence, our tendency to “find” evidence that confirms our views, and our undue focus on recent performance, and undermine our ability to make wise investment choices. It is exactly these challenges, and our mind's ability to trip us up, that valuation-driven investors seek to overcome.

To learn more about valuation-driven investing, see:

- ▶ *The Most Important Thing*, by Howard Marks
- ▶ *Margin of Safety*, by Seth Klarman
- ▶ *The Buffett Way/The Buffett Portfolio*, by Robert Hagstrom
- ▶ *Value Investing*, by James Montier
- ▶ *The Little Book of Common Sense Investing*, John C. Bogle

Ben Graham's 1949 book, *The Intelligent Investor*, is really the foundation of the approach, and it is still worth reading. It can be a bit intimidating for a non-technical investor though—but his light humour helps carry the reader through.

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