

On the third day of Christmas . . .

There are people who would cherish 3 French Hens.

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Frankly, I struggled to find a connection of three French hens to any of our client needs or to a universal concept that all of you might find useful.

Then I simply stopped to think about those in this world who, unlike me, are hungry. They would likely consider three French hens among their prized possessions for no other reason than the eggs that the hens produce. That led me to reflect on the things that I am thankful for right now. On the list is you, dear reader, and the feedback that I get when you read a post and respond or share.

So, if you have any ideas, scroll down and leave a comment or suggestion of something that concerns you at this moment. Or share a question that you have been pondering. I read all the comments.

With much appreciation as the year draws to a close.

December 27, 2018

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Do you find the stock market gut-wrenching?

Here is one thing to do about it . . .

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Day 2 of 12: Do two turtle doves signify twice the peace of just one? As financial planners, we believe that peace of mind is a byproduct of financial planning. But Peace of Mind is hard to find in a world of 24-7, always-on, news cycle.

Today I offer a serious thought experiment for anyone who owns stocks and closely watches their portfolio or regularly listens to the news about the market.

On Christmas Eve 2018, the U.S. stock market was only open until 1:00 PM; but that was enough to drive the indices into “bear” territory (defined as being down by 20% from a recent high). Despite the fact that it was Christmas Eve, reporters were all over it on the evening news broadcasting every plausible explanation that they could come up with. If you watched the news that night, try now to recapture your feelings and the thoughts that were behind them. Did you succumb to *shoulda, woulda, coulda* thinking? Were you asking yourself, “If only I had sold sooner, bought something different, or . . . you fill in the blank.” For those of you watching the market on Monday or listening to the news, I dare say that most of your thoughts were anything but filled with Peace. If you are like most people, your thoughts were likely fear-inducing. But the truly important question is what action or reaction did those feelings cause? Hopefully, none.

After being closed on Christmas Day, the day-after Christmas produced the single largest daily gain ever seen in the DOW 30. It was up 4.98% (1,086 points) in a single day of trading. Now what were your thoughts? and feelings? Do you feel a little lighter than you did on Monday? A little more at peace? After hearing that the market rose nearly 5%, did you succumb to FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) because you believe you should have taken some action at the market open to shore up your stock holdings? [If FOMO is an issue for you, check out this post from last year.](#)

Acting upon our feelings all too often leads to regret. Realizing that is perhaps the first step toward improved portfolio performance. Those feelings are driven by thoughts and beliefs about the market. It is our thoughts and beliefs that we can control and even change. It is important to acknowledge our feelings, but it is more important to think clearly. As fiduciary investment professionals, that is our business.

I believe that this kind of self-evaluation is more important than watching the financial news. At least self-improvement is one thing you can personally do something about. It could be your pathway to Peace of Mind.

Scroll down and leave a comment or question. We read them all.

Category: [Investments](#)

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No Partridges in Pear Trees Here

“Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.” Jim Ryun

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Day 1 of 12: On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me a partridge in a pear tree. You surely know the song, “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” Thankfully, my true love did not give me a partridge or a pear tree. She gave me a new Fitbit that tracks my heart rate and keeps track of my exercise and sleep. I hope that means that she wants to keep me around and wants me to stay healthy.

Nearly two years ago, I attended a 2017 goal-setting course and made an important discovery—that my chief motivation for getting and staying healthy was that I would then have a better shot at seeing our son, David, graduate from college. (He was in the 8th grade at the time.)

“Duh!” you say. “Doesn’t everybody have the goal of seeing their children, or even grandchildren, graduate and grow into adults?” Well yes, but there is a big distinction to be made between aspirations and goals. Seeing David graduate is a wonderful aspiration and serves as a useful motivation, but is not a well-defined goal. As financial planners we are compelled by our professional standards to ferret out client goals, but too often clients settle for expressing only aspirations. Even “*getting healthy and staying healthy*” is too vague to be a well-defined goal. I re-crafted my goal: “Exercise for 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week, starting on January 10, 2017.” This is a habit goal.

Habit goals, such as “save 10% of income” unlike achievement goals, have a beginning date rather than a target for getting them done. Determining the best way to move toward the goal led me to one of my best investments yet: a treadmill to put in my basement. My goal of 30 minutes, 5 times a week was “installed” on March 30, 2017.

Fast forward to the fall of 2017 and my annual physical. My internist told me that I might be the healthiest he has seen me in 30+ years. I have kept up the exercise and this year added a new habit goal to my treadmill routine: Exercise 3 times a week with weights for strength and yoga for balance. That one took a bit longer to “install” but I’m happy to report that I have the habit.

With the new Fitbit, my goals are even more measurable than they were before. I am so grateful that Jennifer is encouraging habits that are good for me. Next up, “Schedule and have a date night with her each week, starting December 28, 2018, and continuing until “installed.”

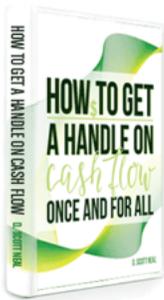
If you need help simply setting goals, [click here for a step-by-step guide.](#)

Category: [Goal Setting](#)

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About Me

I am a Certified Financial Planner and the founder and CEO of D. Scott Neal, Inc., a fee-only financial planning and SEC-registered investment advisory firm. (By the way, registration of an investment advisor does not imply any level of skill or training.) We help people make informed, intelligent decisions with their money at any stage of life. Prior to creating the firm, I practiced as a CPA.

I am the author of over 100 articles in MD Update, a publication for doctors, and a contributor to the book, *Wealth Strategies for Doctors*.

I am a veteran of the U.S. Army having served 4 years on active duty in Nurnberg, Germany and an additional 6 years in the U.S. Army Reserve. I attained the rank of Captain.

I hold two masters degrees, a MBA with emphasis in accounting and a Master of Divinity with emphasis in Pastoral Care.

If you want to explore how a financial decision will affect your life and those whom you love, you have come to the right place. Welcome!



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