



BETTER MONEY
DECISIONS

THE 10 STEPS

EVERY SMART FAMILY MUST TAKE
TO ENSURE THEIR MONEY LASTS
IN RETIREMENT.

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

From The CEO



Lorraine Ell, CEO

Better Money Decisions

What's the scariest question you could ask your investment advisor? I'll tell you the scariest one we get... "Will I have enough to retire?".

But that makes sense. Why wouldn't you wonder? Think about all the things you need to understand and consider.

How should you determine cash flow strategies from your investments?

How can you manage taxes as you withdraw retirement funds?

Are your investments allocated globally and by market capitalization?

Is your risk-and-return equation optimized to generate the income you need for the next several decades?

How could you possibly do all that alone? If any of that sounds like you, then don't worry. We have worked with thousands of families just like you.

Despite how overwhelming it all seems now, everything will make sense with our help.

To get the most from this guide...

We suggest saving this guide to your computer so you can print a copy to make notes.

When printing, make sure to skip the first page to save ink!



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 1

Understand you Don't Have As Much As You Think

Years ago a wealthy friend of mine, as we sat in her home overlooking San Francisco Bay, declared, "A million dollars doesn't go as far as it used to." And she was right! It doesn't.

Once retired and faced with the money you saved, it's easy to be tempted to buy the fancy car you always wanted and take a round the world cruise. Don't! Settle into retirement first for a number of reasons.

Retirement is a dramatic change in lifestyle that a predictable, well organized routine of life and the next day you are set adrift with little need for a clock let alone a calendar.

Boredom can set in and the lack of purpose and meaningful work may create a feeling of despair. You looked forward to retiring for years but perhaps did not plan for what your days would be like.

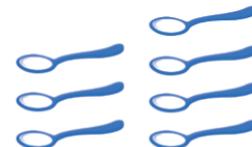
Your Money Will Likely Buy Less Tomorrow



1916
\$0.09 = Quart of Milk



1966
\$0.09 = 1 Small Glass of Milk



2017
\$0.09 = 7 Tablespoons of Milk

In the first year of retirement, you do not yet know how much it will cost. A budget and a solid financial plan will help but until you spend a year monitoring your investments and expenditures, you will not have a realistic view. Overspending in the first year of retirement could lead to a reduction in lifestyle in the future.

In our years of helping retirees plan for the future, we have seen those with substantial assets have to curtail spending. A nest egg can be easily depleted by helping family members or spending at higher than realistic levels on life's luxuries. Think of it in terms of "selective luxury." You can't have it all, all the time but you can treat yourself to a few indulgences in moderation.

A true understanding of who you are and what is important to you will help in making wise spending decisions throughout retirement. That's what is worth its weight in gold.



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 2

Monitor Your Investments

Retirement planning and management are not accomplished as well as they could be when you are doing it yourself. This is not the time in life to take a chance on trying to do what professionals do better.

The stakes are too high. So professional money management is recommended — in particular, an advisor who is also a fiduciary.

Markets change and so do your circumstances. All too often I see portfolios that look like they were put together prior to the 1980s when investment vehicles such as Exchange Traded funds (ETFs) and passive mutual funds were not available.

Even the ability to invest in international stocks and bonds was more difficult then and the typical portfolio consisted of stocks in large US companies and maybe a few individual bonds.

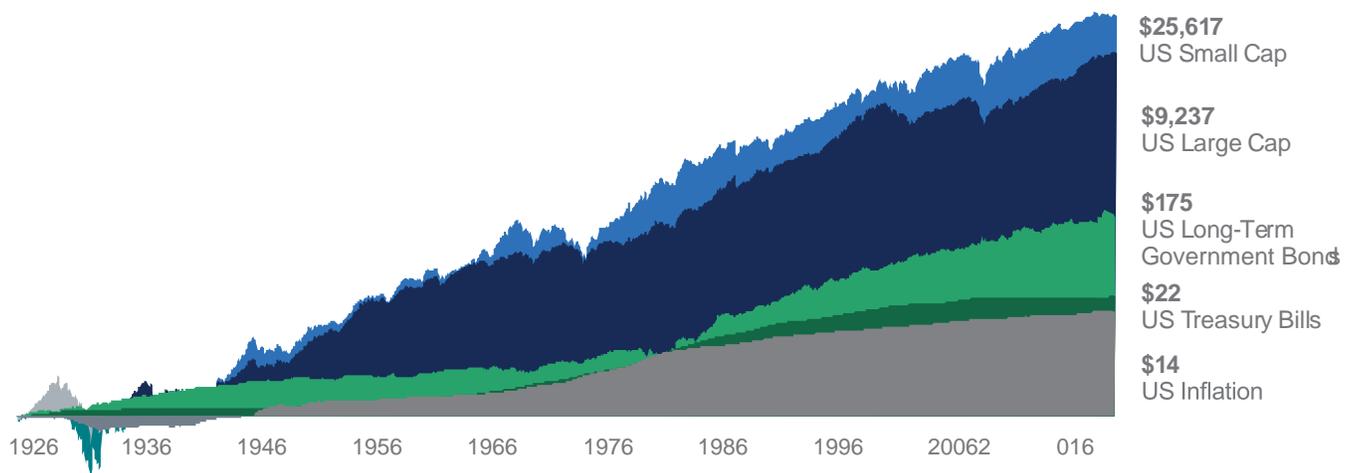
The science of investing, based on research going back decades now, shows the importance of diversification across multiple asset classes for a successful investment strategy.

A confluence of three areas of academic research: Efficient Market Hypothesis, Modern Portfolio Theory, and the Four-Factor Model provides a scientific approach to investing.

The move now is away from an active management approach that relies on the judgment and experience of a manager to buy and sell based on forecasts and analytical research, to passive index-based management.

In part, this is due to the documented fact that active managers are wrong well over 50% of the time.

Growth of \$1 from 1926 to 2019





BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

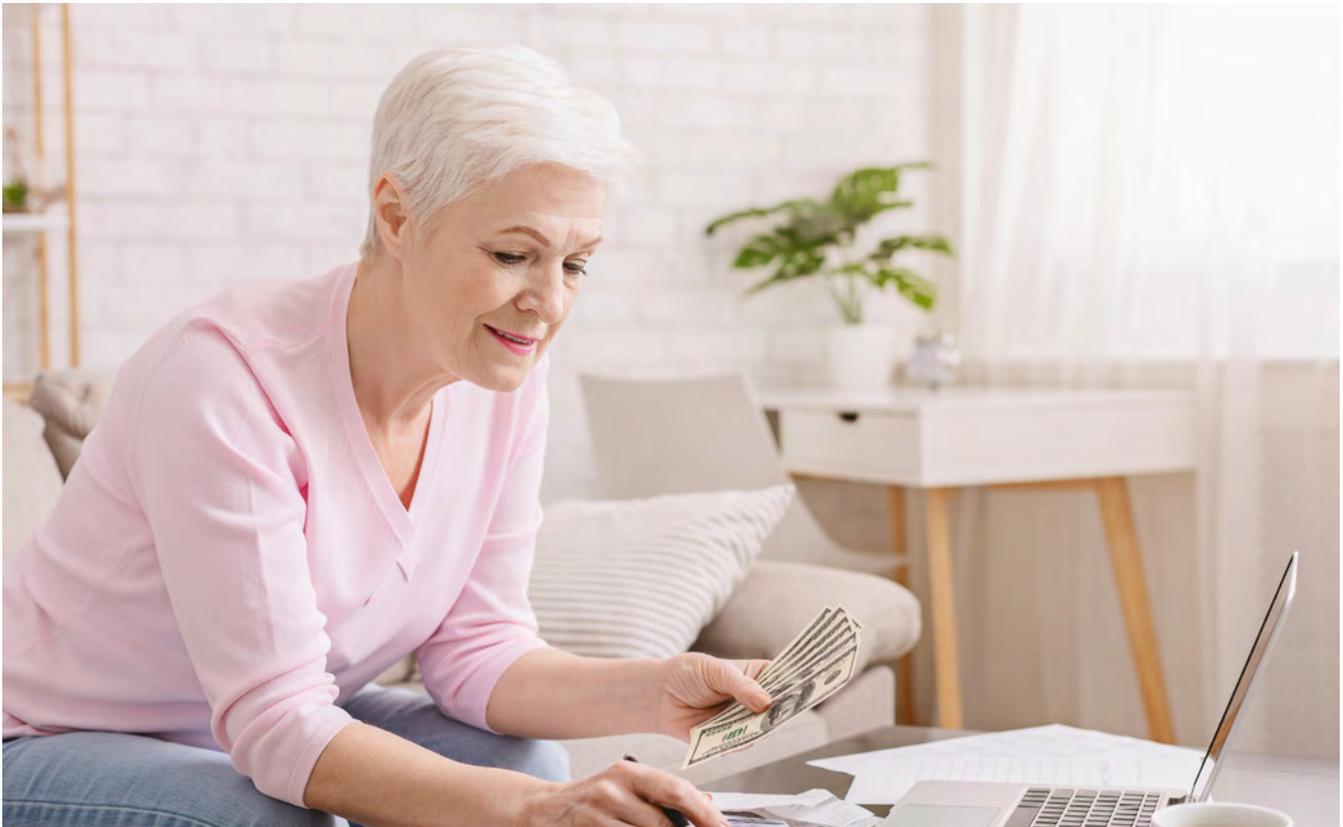
STEP 2

Monitor Your Investments

This does not mean, however, that the portfolio should be set and forgotten! Disciplined rebalancing and repositioning of investments as markets develop and change over time is necessary.

Otherwise you are left with a portfolio like those I mentioned earlier, stuck in a bygone era. Worse yet is the portfolio that moves out of the level of risk you chose because one asset class has appreciated more than others and the portfolio was never properly rebalanced.

Monitoring investment portfolios becomes even more critical with regards to risk and cash flow management. Being aware of the growth and, in some years, the decline of your investments will enable you to adjust your spending in lean years and develop strategies for making the money last throughout your lifetime.





BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 3

Take Enough Risk

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all had unlimited resources and could afford to put the money in a treasury bond and just live off the interest? Unfortunately, that is not the situation for most of us.

Once retired, we have finite resources and those resources have to last for the rest of our lives. That said, putting all our eggs in a basket of investments that carry no risk will not provide enough growth and income for us to live the life we want in retirement.

One of the biggest investment mistakes is being too careful. The old rule of 100 minus your age to determine the appropriate risk for your portfolio has been proven untenable. Here's how that looks: if you are 65 then $100 - 65 = 35$ which, according to the rule, means you should have 35% in stocks and 65% in bonds.

This may have worked in a time when the average life expectancy was 75 and when short term bonds were paying 5% but it does not work now. Don't be fooled! There is no formula that universally fits every family in every instance.

In fact, new research shows that if you start increasing risk in your portfolio as you age, you will modestly reduce the likelihood that you will run out of money.

This runs contrary to everything previously touted but as I mentioned earlier, that is one of the dangers of failing to keep pace with current research and changes in investment strategies.

Historical Risk/Return (1973-2018)

	40/60	50/50	60/30	70/30
Average Annual Return	9.02%	9.72%	10.40%	11.06%
Best Calendar Year	23.59% (1975)	27.69% (1975)	31.86% (1975)	36.11% (1975)
Worst Calendar Year	-15.18% (2008)	-20.08% (2008)	-24.80% (2008)	-29.32% (2008)
Years with a Loss	8/46	8/46	8/46	8/46



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STEP 3

Take Enough Risk

One of the primary reasons for a diversified investment portfolio is the need to keep up with inflation. Since the average life expectancy in the United States is around 85 years of age (women live a little longer so this is even more important for them) the need to beat inflation is critical.

And these are averages. The number of people living into their 90s has increased 40% in the last decade. Recognize that the average rate of inflation over a 20-30 year period is substantial.

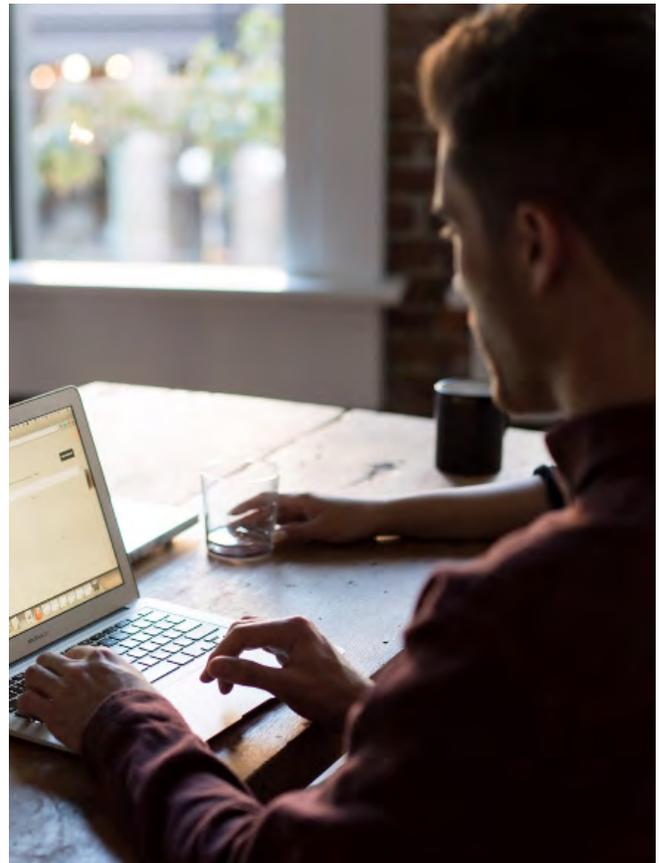
Having the appropriate stock to bond ratio will keep a portfolio healthy and producing cash flow for years. Determining the proper level of risk for you is dependent on a few factors - one of which is your personal ability to handle risk.

Some of us have a higher risk tolerance than others but no one wants to live through retirement fearing a market crash.

Equally important is the ability of your investments to provide the lifestyle you want in retirement; an accurate understanding of which will be clearer with financial planning.

It may be that you will need to take more risk than you are comfortable in taking.

A professional advisor can help you keep your emotions in check in times of market turbulence so that you can live the life you want.



Assuming your objective is long-term capital appreciation to help provide for your retirement, then your advisor's goal should be to mitigate the tax consequences of the holdings in your account.



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 4

Plan a Yearly Cash Flow Strategy

Planning yearly cash flow is as important as planning for retirement. Your nest egg of investments will provide cash flow so that you can live but without a strategy you could take money out of the wrong place at the wrong time.

We've all heard the horror stories from the 2008-2009 market crash when new retirees sold at market lows and lost 50% of their savings. But wait! That did not have to happen!

This is a perfect example of the lack of cash flow management. Buying high and selling low is one of the biggest mistakes individual investors make and this is usually caused by a lack of forethought and planning for the cash needed to live.

One of the easiest ways to plan for cash needs in retirement is what is known as the bucket approach. By dividing your assets into their different uses will help in understanding not only where the money is coming from but also what will need to be sold to keep the strategy working.

This chart shows that the decision in choosing what investment to use to create cash flow in any given year can have long reaching impact on the success of your retirement future.

For example, one bucket may contain short term bonds, cash and maybe a CD or bond ladder to supply living expenses for the next 3-5 years so that if there is a market downturn, you don't have to sell at market lows.

The Same Sequence Of Returns, But In Reverse Order

End Of Year	Portfolio A	Portfolio B	Portfolio A	Portfolio B
1	-18.39%	\$77,528	26.57%	\$120,241
2	-19.14%	\$58,506	19.61%	\$137,631
3	-4.59%	\$50,712	5.26%	\$139,237
4	18.47%	\$53,510	16.57%	\$155,846
5	6.79%	\$51,018	33.60%	\$200,540
6	14.30%	\$51,527	21.23%	\$235,909
7	-15.39%	\$38,395	13.92%	\$261,752
8	14.59%	\$36,709	-1.61%	\$251,277
9	8.95%	\$32,821	21.03%	\$296,146
10	19.52%	\$31,084	16.21%	\$336,230
11	20.72%	\$29,011	20.72%	\$397,392
12	16.21%	\$25,230	19.52%	\$466,249
13	21.03%	\$21,391	8.95%	\$499,749
14	-1.61%	\$13,353	14.59%	\$563,719
15	13.92%	\$5,992	-15.39%	\$470,097
16	21.23%	\$0	14.30%	\$527,763
17	33.60%	\$0	6.79%	\$554,352
18	16.57%	\$0	18.47%	\$646,101
19	5.26%	\$0	-4.59%	\$607,610
20	19.61%	\$0	-19.14%	\$483,551
21	26.57%	\$0	-18.39%	\$386,497



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 4

Monitor Your Investments

Another bucket may be comprised of riskier investments to help fund living expenses in the future. You might even have a third bucket for extraordinary expenses such as a new car or major home improvements.

The first bucket can be replenished throughout retirement by rebalancing the overall portfolio and using the growth proceeds to add to the “safer” bucket.

Another strategy is systematic withdrawal where you take small amounts from all of your investments to fund living expenses. Under this approach, the common standard used to be the 4% rule.

In other words, limiting withdrawals to 4% of the value of the portfolio. Since markets fluctuate, this will mean that your income will also fluctuate.

The 4% rule may no longer be viable. As bond yields have decreased and with markets at all time highs, many predict a future decade with lower expected returns.

So cash flow management is also not a one - and - done project but needs to be continually monitored for the money to last lifetime.

It is paramount that you choose an advisor who can provide throughout retirement.

“Buying high and selling low is one of the biggest mistakes individual investors make. This is usually caused by a lack of forethought and planning for the cash needed to live.”



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 5

Track Your Spending

Once retired the desire to do all the things you could not do when working comes into focus. Dreams of international travel, buying an RV and touring the country, spending time at the beach, or indulging your grandchildren are part of why you saved for the future.

REALITY CHECK! If you are like the average retiree, you have finite resources and need to understand what you can and can't afford. Now this doesn't mean you have to sacrifice your dreams. You just want to fulfill them with an eye on the actual costs, and it always costs more than you think!

One of the best ways is to keep track of your spending. With computers and the internet there are numerous programs that will aggregate your accounts and provide reports on what you are spending and where over different time periods: yearly, monthly and weekly.

Most online account aggregators are free such as www.mint.com, www.personalcapital.com, and www.youneedabudget.com.

It takes some effort to get these set up but once done are easy to maintain and will keep track of all of your assets and expenditures.

Part of making sure your money lasts is knowing where the money goes and how fast you are depleting your resources. Then you can make decisions about where to cut if you are spending too much or what other dream you can fulfill if spending too little.

Retirement Budget Sheet

Expenses NEEDS	Budget	Actual	Difference
Home: Mortgage, Rent, Insurance, Taxes, HELOC			
Utilities: Electric, Gas, Cable, Phone, Water			
Groceries & Household Goods			
Clothing			
Auto Expenses: Car Loan, Insurance, Repairs, Gas			
Health Care: Insurance, Co-pays, Medication			
Pet Care			
Personal Services: Hair, Nails, Maid			
Credit Card Debt			
Miscellaneous			
SUBTOTAL			

Expenses NEEDS	Budget	Actual	Difference
Dining Out			
Entertainment			
Travel			
Charitable Gifts			
Hobbies			
Luxuries			
Miscellaneous			
SUBTOTAL			

TOTAL			
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BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 6

Be Flexible in Your Spending

You are retired and can choose what you want to do or not. Once spending is tracked, the analysis of where the money goes is the next step. This involves separating needs from wants and only you can make this decision for your life.

At Better Money Decisions, we talk to clients about using their money to live the life they want. Unless you have unlimited resources, decisions need to be made about where the money goes.

As markets fluctuate your spending can be adjusted to meet the decline in cash flow in any particular year. This may involve traveling or cruising every two or three years rather than every year. It may necessitate postponing the purchase of a new car for another year or so.

This is in your control but you need to be fearless about knowing when to adjust or even cut back. Baby boomers are known for wanting to have it all, always. Retirement means playing the long game. Too much spending in the first years of retirement can have disastrous consequences later on.

This contradicts the conventional advice to spend more early in retirement because you are at your healthiest and want to do more.

The old adage of “go go, go slow, no go” can lead retirees to overspend in the early years and when the time comes to need more for health care and long term care the money is not there.

The willingness to adjust your spending when investment values decline or when inflation heats up and the necessities of life become more expensive will go far in making your money last. It's easy to say but hard to do in the moment as you see friends jetting to far off places and family members who need your help.

But as with the advice delivered on airplanes of putting your oxygen mask on first before helping others, you need to take care of your needs so that you are not a burden on your family in later years.





BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 7

Find Your Rightsize

Don't be house poor! Home ownership is the asset with the most emotional attachment. A 2015 report discovered that for those between the ages of 65 and 74, 56% found the emotional value of the home was more important than its monetary value.

This percentage increased after age 75. It becomes clearer every day in my firm that these emotional decisions can far outweigh financial ones.

The emotional aspect of home ownership coupled with the prevailing advice from financial experts to pay off your house before retiring explains why we have seen far too many people who are what I call "house poor".

They have taken an inheritance or made double payments on their mortgage without providing enough for the retirement savings to fund life after work. Having a paid for house can leave you cash strapped in the future.

There is no argument that having a paid for house in retirement provides security and reduces the amount of income needed to live the rest of your life without worry. Paying off your primary home while still working AND saving for retirement is the ideal solution but taking liquid assets and exchanging them for the illiquid investment in a home is not the right decision in retirement.

Consider selling the large home and rightsizing to one that can be purchased with the equity already in your current home. The need for a large home is lessened in later years as children and loved ones move into their own homes.

Rightsizing has many advantages: less house to maintain, less house to clean and lower costs for utilities and property taxes. By rightsizing you can have a paid for house and money to invest for living in retirement.

We often hear retirees dream of having the entire family back home for holidays and summer vacations but that rarely happens. Your children have busy lives with grandchildren involved in activities and friends. More retirees travel to their children's homes than the other way around.

The family home may end up being an albatross preventing you from living the life you have dreamed of.



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 7

Find Your Rightsize

I encourage you to think more practically about your home. Unless you live in one of the booming real estate areas of the country, home prices don't always appreciate. The family home may end up being an albatross preventing you from living the life you want. Take a good hard look at the value of your home both in terms of its investment potential and in terms of your expectation for its utility.

Rightsizing frees you from the responsibility of the upkeep of a large home, frees up money you can spend on what you want in retirement and reduces the clutter accumulated over decades. Do you really want your kids or strangers to have to dig through your possessions after you are gone? Do everyone a favor and rightsize.



To get the most from this guide...

Men and women have difficulty separating emotions from investing in their homes as well as the stock and bond markets. Having an independent coach to help make the right decisions can keep emotions in check.



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 8

Maintain Your Physical & Emotional Health

Good health is the hallmark of a happy and successful retirement but it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain as age begins to take its toll. Keeping your mind and body healthy will enable you to enjoy the benefits of retirement well into your later years.

In addition to the lifestyle advantages of staying healthy, the monetary benefits are compelling. According to a recent study, couples retiring now at age 65 will need nearly \$280,000 for health care expenses throughout retirement.

Health care costs are increasing by over 6% per year, far more than the rate of inflation overall and the cost increases show no signs of stopping.



The steps needed to stay healthy are well documented. Exercise, limit alcohol, eat well, maintain a healthy weight, get regular check ups and stay safe is all good advice that is easier to write than to do. A healthy lifestyle will go far in reducing the need for medical services; thus reducing this expense in retirement.

Joining a gym is a way to not only stay physically healthy but to also increase social interactions leading to good mental and psychological health. Social engagement promotes physical and mental health. Studies have documented that those who are socially isolated have health risks similar to a smoker.

It is also possible to reduce health care cost by reviewing your spending on a yearly basis. Medicare provides the opportunity to change your insurance during the yearly Open Enrollment Period between October 5th and December 7th.

The website www.medicare.gov is easy to use and will provide a cost comparison of Part B/C and Part D insurance options. Part D offerings will change based on the medications you use so checking it yearly can save valuable dollars.

It also helps to be sure you are getting the best price for your medications. Apps like GoodRX will compare prices in your area for prescriptions.

Beware of overcharging for medications bought through your Part D insurance plan! Believe it or not, at times, your medications can be purchased at a cheaper price if insurance is not used.



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 9

Start Comprehensive Financial Planning

Nothing replaces planning. Even if you are already in retirement and have not done a financial plan it's better late than never.

A comprehensive plan contains all of the financial information you will need to know throughout retirement. It should contain a valuation of all of your assets, your income streams, your expenses, and your goals and needs.

A plan requires work on your part. The more detail you provide to your advisor, the more accurate the outcome. The amount of necessary information depends upon the scope and complexity of your situation. Some of the documents that may be needed are:

- **Income Tax Forms**
- **Investment Accounts**
- **Social Security Statement**
- **Rental Properties**
- **Business assets**
- **Budget**
- **Mortgages**
- **Debts**
- **Insurance Policies**

Data gathering is only the start. The data needs to be analyzed to discover the actions that need to be taken to meet your goals, answer your questions and create a plan for now and the future.

You will need an experienced and competent professional to complete this analysis and communicate the results. You should expect specific recommendations and a plan of action to get you to your goals.

Perhaps the most important part of the planning process is implementation. A plan has no value if no action is taken to make it work for you.

Beware! Many so called "planners" will do a plan for you for little or no cost but the plan is not only a one time production but is all too often just a loss leader to get you to buy products such as annuities or commission based mutual funds. Find an experienced professional who is a proven fee-only, full-time fiduciary to help with the plan.

Remember, planning is about setting goals and finding the best path toward meeting them but life happens and plans need to be adjusted.

That's the reason planning is a continuous process. As new questions and problems arise, a professional advisor can help revise the plan and aid in you making better financial decisions along the way to meeting your goals.



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

STEP 10

Delay Taking Social Security as Long as Possible

The decision about when to start taking social security is one of the most important for any retiree. Social Security is guaranteed lifetime income with cost of living adjustments and remains a valuable safety net for the majority of retirees.

A popular recent headline in the media declares that “Social Security is bankrupt”. Once you read further, you learn that it isn’t really bankrupt but may have to reduce benefits if Congress doesn’t take action to mitigate the dwindling reserves.

When the news media declares that Social Security is bankrupt what they really mean is that the fund will not be able to pay 100% of benefits but will only be able to pay a percentage at a time in the future.

A disruption of benefits for retirees would amount to political suicide for any elected official. Social Security has had problems in the past but when the situation got desperate in the early 1980s, Congress took action and benefits have never been lowered.

So what should you do? Many retirees need to take benefits as soon as possible because they have not saved enough for retirement. This decision comes at a hefty cost. Starting benefits before full retirement age will reduce your lifetime benefits by up to 25%!

If you wait until full retirement age (between 66 and 67 years of age for those born between 1950 and 1960), you will receive 100% of your yearly benefits.

Delaying taking benefits until age 70 is even better. Your benefits will increase 8% every year after full retirement age until the age of 70. That kind of return is hard to beat consistently with almost any strategy.

Social Security Benefits

Age of Benefits Start	Percent of Benefits Received
62	70%
63	75%
64	80%
65	86.66%
66	93.33%
67	100%
68	108%
69	116%
70	124%

Source: Social Security Administration

If you can afford to wait, do so. A professional advisor should be able to help you make this decision and find a claiming strategy that works for you. If your advisor does not have an answer to this important decision, it’s time to change advisors.



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

CONCLUSION

What Can You Do Today To Take Control Of Your Future?

None of these steps have to be frightening or stressful. We understand that it's not easy to take that first step toward getting financially prepared for retirement. Just like the muscles you train for a marathon, your financial habits are a muscle that have to be trained as well.

When you call us, you get an advisor who will compassionately listen to your financial challenges and aim to understand you and your finances.

We are here to help review your entire financial life, starting with your investments and covering your entire lifestyle. Our expert advisors are happy to speak with you, at no charge, to understand your financial concerns and learn how we can help.



BETTER MONEY
DECISIONS

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BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

Aim For Financial Freedom

Our Team Can Help You Secure The Life Of Your Dreams

Better Money Decisions specializes in comprehensive financial service you can't find anywhere else. We get to know you: What goals are important to you? How can you achieve them? How can you relax and live the life of your dreams, with the knowledge that your financial future is secure?

We partner with you to be sure you understand every aspect of your stock-and-bond allocation, as well as the various aspects of your plan.

Our pledge to you is that we will regularly review the elements of your plan and your investments, and always handle your requests in a timely fashion. Need a new vehicle? Home remodel or repair? Want to buy or sell real estate? Make charitable donations or give gifts to your family? We can help you with all those decisions, and many more.

Total Investment Management

Investing with Better Money Decisions begins with you, not the market! Once the Financial Wellness for Life planning process is complete, we'll recommend a portfolio designed exclusively for you, based on your needs and goals.

Better Money Decisions' investment committee is headed by Lorraine Ell and Lea Ann Knight CFP® national experts and authors of investment and planning columns whose work has appeared in Forbes, Kiplinger's and US News & World Report.

Your investments are managed by a team of experts with decades of experience managing money for clients throughout the country.

We prioritize education and ongoing guidance on every financial question you have. Everything from buying or selling real estate, to spending money for your next vacation.

Lastly, Regular check-ins about your financial goals. Are you on track? Has anything changed in your life? Life is fluid, and full of changes and surprises. Your plan needs to be adaptable as well.

Better Money Decisions Can Be Your Partner For The Next Exciting Chapter Of Your Life.**

We are here to help review your entire financial life, and your finances are just the starting point.

Our expert advisors are happy to speak with you, at no charge, to understand your financial concerns and learn how we can help.

Please call us at **(844) 507-0961**, extension 710 to get the process started.

We look forward to getting to know you and your family.



BETTER MONEY DECISIONS

Financial Wellness for Life[®]

Holistic Wealth Management

Our recognized, holistic wealth management system allows us to partner with you as your complete financial advocate. Our team works in equal parts as your investment manager, financial planner, coach, and personal guide.

We stepped away from the stuffy “button-down” firms and started one that makes integrity and collaboration a cornerstone. We demand the highest level of expertise from our team, and the work is never done. Evolving regulations, technology, and your own changing circumstances keep us continually engaged in making our services even better.

Financial Wellness for Life[®]

Financial decisions impact almost every aspect of our lives. Without a holistic view, a change in one area can disrupt others, preventing you from reaching personal financial harmony. That’s the reason we created Financial Wellness for Life[®]. You, and your family’s, financial freedom is our goal.



