

Rodger on Retirement

The Media Instills Financial Worry

If you read or listen to financial media, then you are not surprised to hear how writers describe the economy and capital markets. I come across words such as *may, might, can, could*. For example, Apple *may* disappoint, unemployment numbers *could* rise, Dow *might* fall, and my personal favorite, the market *may* go down. These do not appear to be news to me; so much as they are forecasts from journalists in need of something, anything, to write about.

It appears that the mission of the financial media is to instill fear, both far and wide. You see it from Wall Street to Main Street. They focus on what could happen. Well, I like to focus on the positive instead of the negative. Yet, much of the media are guilty of pandering to our base instincts of fear and flight. The market *MAY* go down, *you must get out*.

Actually, the market *has* gone down hundreds of times. Yet, *USA Today* reported on Monday, August 3, 2015: "But the broad stock market still remains about 1% off its late May all-time high..." Not bad for something that has fallen hundreds of times.

I scanned that edition of *USA Today* while my family and I were vacationing in Western Maryland. I was struck by the negative tone and fear rampant in the article titled "Wild Ride May Persist on Wall Street." The writer revealed his bias for fear slinging as he shoveled both uncertainty and power packed words and phrases into his article such as:

"A chance for more summer stock swoons, forecast, potential headwinds, waves of worry, anxiety, wild ride, stocks gyrating sharply amid fears financial meltdown, massive price decline, global economic slowdown, facing another headwind, threat of coming rate hikes."

As a financial advisor focusing on helping retirement minded couples and individuals prepare for the day their paychecks will stop, I have witnessed market ups and downs for decades.

While many of us are aware of market cycles, bull and bear markets, many are not. Articles such as this, that get under your skin and build fear and anxiety, do not represent balanced reporting. Many in the financial services business label this type of media reporting as noise. The type of noise that can derail the best laid financial plans. *Don't just stand there, they yell, do something! Buy this, sell that*. Well, sometimes, nothing is the right thing to do, as my mentor Nick Murray reminds me often. I urge you to spend more time working on your financial plan rather than listen to the media telling you that civilization as we know it *could* end tomorrow, or that the sun *might* not come up.