

Looking Back at Your Year, Was it Well-Lived?

December has always been a time of reflection for me. Usually, I have more time indoors, curled up with a warm mug in front of a fire, forced to slow down a bit. It is in these times of solitude that I like to look back on my year and reflect on the good times, the hard times and times that shaped me into what I will become in the next year. Will I become a better Mom, a better partner, a better co-worker? What did I learn and how have I grown over the last year? But most importantly, I like to use the time to do a bit of a gut-check. Was my life well-lived this last year? What does that even mean? Just like every snowflake is unique, what every person considers “well-lived” may be different. For me, it means did I have a healthy work-life balance? Did I give my time to the people I care about the most? Did I spend my money on the things and experiences that helped bring me joy or did I waste it on “stuff” that I will most likely just be dropping off at Forever Home Resale Shop where I volunteer? How did I do for 2022? Was my life well-lived?

One of the guiding principals in my financial firm, the Waite Financial Group, is to provide clarity, confidence and financial peace of mind so our clients can live their best lives now. We work really hard to help each unique client to understand what well-lived means to them and then help them try and achieve that. But with any job, there are highs and lows. Sometimes you feel like you are putting in so much extra effort that you have no time to even breathe. You become task-oriented because your to-do list is so long (who else has SO many red flags lining the right-hand side of your screen in Outlook?) It’s when we get to that stage, that we need something to bring us back, to ground us and recenter us on what our goal and purpose is. Why we do what we do. Earlier this year, our team was at a point where we were short-staffed and everyone was pulling double-duty to make sure our clients were cared for and getting the level of service they deserved. We were recruiting and hiring at the same time, which added another level of stress, but we knew we were growing and the team needed to grow with us. It was definitely a period of growing pains! (And not the Kirk Cameron type!)

Then I went to lunch at the Mayflower Restaurant in Dunlap with some of our newer clients, Tracy and Eric. It was important for me to get feedback from them about how they have enjoyed working with our team and going through our financial planning process and if there are any areas we could improve. We had a great conversation where they provided both positive feedback and some really good constructive feedback I could take back to the team to improve our processes. At the end of the lunch Tracy summed up the value they have gained from working with our team. She said, “You didn’t just teach us how to save, you taught us how to live.” Wow. I was blown away by this statement. Here I sat across from a very successful couple and they were sharing stories of how they have been doing more to enjoy time with their three daughters because they had the financial peace of mind that their future is secure. And watching their adventures through Facebook, I saw that they truly had a 2022 that was well-lived!

Most often, clients come to us who have existing relationships with financial advisors. And that is great! They are looking for a second opinion on their financial plan. We charge a fee to develop a comprehensive financial plan with recommendations. Clients can then implement the recommendations on their own, take them back to their advisor and have them help implement the recommendations or have our team help implement them. Your financial peace of mind is priceless. If you don’t have clarity about what your financial plan is all the way up to retirement, but most importantly through retirement, you can find yourself with an added level of stress and uncertainty that can keep you from enjoying your life now. Time and time again when we meet with clients for the first

time, we hear how they love to vacation and spend time with their family, but they don't enjoy the vacation as much as they should because they are stressed about the money they are spending. Should they have put that money in a Roth IRA instead? Should it have gone in a college fund? Should they have saved their bonus this year instead of spending it on this vacation? The same rings true for home improvements. They spend the money on a new kitchen, but every time they walk into the kitchen, they get a sick feeling in their stomach, knowing how much they spent, and wonder if that money should have been saved instead.

While my clients, Tracy and Eric, gave me the clarity I needed, at just the right time, to keep me focused on why I do what I do, how are you gaining clarity on your future? There are three statements I want you to say out loud to give yourself a gut-check of how confident you are with your financial plan:

- 1) I know that I am saving enough, in the right places, to get me all the way through retirement without running out of money.
- 2) I know that I can spend money on vacations and other things and not negatively impact my retirement plan.
- 3) I know that I am taking 100% advantage of all the benefits my company is offering.

If you hesitated or stumbled on any of the above statements, it may be time for a second opinion so that you can have the financial peace of mind that can help you enjoy life now. How was your 2022? Was it well-lived, or did a lack of clarity bring some stress that prevented you from living your best life? New York Times best selling author, Ilchi Lee stated, "To see truth as truth, we don't need a lot of study. It's not complicated. What we need is pure observation. An open mind and fresh eyes will serve us well."

Do you have a specific question? E-mail me at: anne.e.schutt@nm.com and we can include your question in an upcoming article.

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