

Your Money

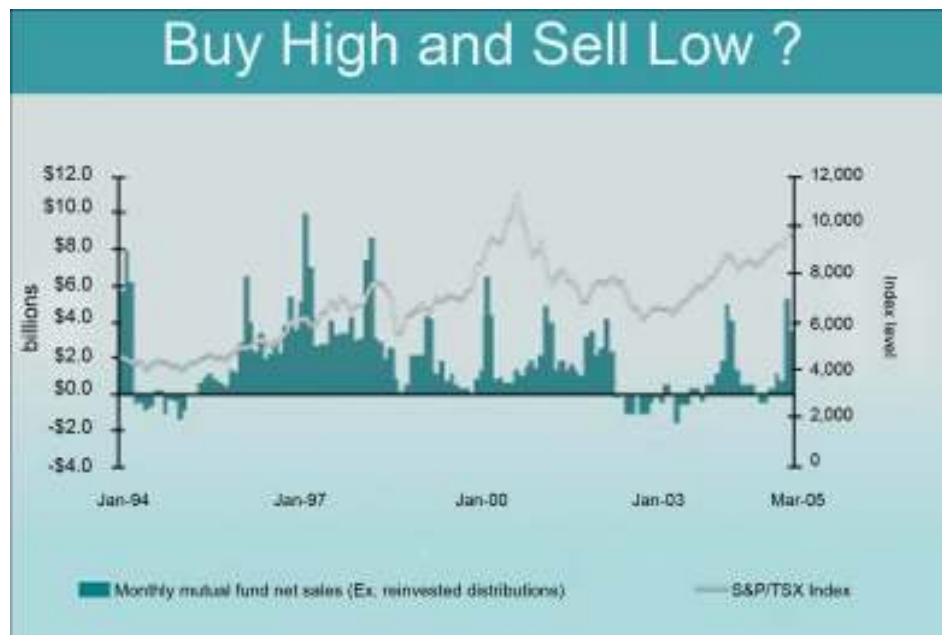
Most North Americans feel some sort of financial strain, an overwhelming majority of Canadians (and Americans) worry that they won't have enough retirement savings to last the rest of their lives.

Though different families' main concerns might vary, most financial issues are connected. Those who worry that they don't have enough retirement savings have the same trouble with managing their money and sticking to budgets as those who worry about debt or insufficient savings.

Saving money is not made the high priority it ought to be because people haven't learned to use their money effectively. Many families have trouble paying bills, credit cards, mortgage, and car payments, so managing debt is a major concern.

And because so many adults can expect to care for their children as well as their aging parents, money has to be especially well-managed in order for people to secure children's futures without neglecting themselves or their parents.

Perhaps the reason so many people feel they are falling short is because they often go against conventional wisdom. We are told to "Buy low and sell high," but so often do-it-yourself investors are unwilling to wait through the low points and think about their investments as long-term projects.



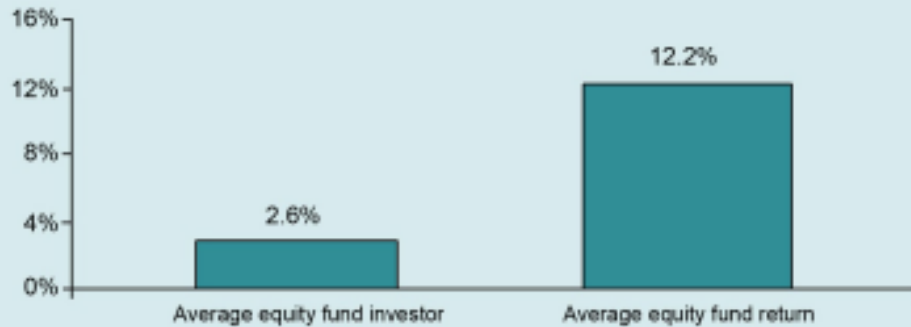
As a result, people usually end up buying high, panicking, and then selling low. They let their emotions guide their financial decisions rather than good sense and sound advice. Investments require commitment. One has to leave fears and emotions out of finance management.



People also require financial Planners' expertise. Thanks to the advice available on the Internet it seems almost anyone can successfully manage investments, playing the stock market with ease. But although there is plenty of good advice in Internet articles, it's important to consult a trusted financial Planner before putting your money at stake. The advice given to the average do-it-yourself investor only skims the surface of all of the intricacies of financial management. There's simply too much to learn! A financial advisor is trained in all of the details you can easily miss. The proof is in the results. Do-it-yourself investors consistently underperform the markets.

Do-It-Yourself Investors Have Underperformed the Markets

From 1984 to 2003, average equity funds returned 12.2% annually. The average investor received only 2.6% annually.



Source: Dalbar Inc. - July 2003 (U.S. study updated annually)

Simple mistakes like these keep people from putting their money to work for them. In this section I've included articles that will help you understand how your money is being used, and how you can use it to your advantage. But first, we have to take a look at what so many North Americans are getting wrong.

Additionally, in this section, you will find some articles about how to manage your finances when life burdens you with a heavier load, and also for times when you are financially comfortable and secure. Sometimes you will find that you need financial help, while at other points you might be able to offer financial assistance. Remember that putting your money to work for you means putting it to work for the people and organizations you care about as well.