



VWG WEALTH MANAGEMENT  
A Hightower Company

December 2021 Ponderings and Musings - Better Together

"Me and you, and you and me  
No matter how they toss the dice, it had to be  
The only one for me is you, and you for me  
So happy together."

-Garry Bonner and Alan Gordon "Happy Together" (The Turtles)

"Love is the answer, at least for most of the questions of my heart.  
Like why are we here? And where do we go?  
And how come it's so hard?  
It's not always easy and  
Sometimes life can be deceiving.  
I'll tell you one thing, it's always better when we're together."

- Jack Johnson "Better Together"

**Better Together**

Hoping to put pandemic distancing behind us, the entire VWG team safely spent some well-needed time together last week. Marnie and Jeff Grinspoon

graciously hosted our growing team at their home, ugly sweaters and all! After another year of hybrid and remote work, our celebration reminded us once again how much we enjoy being together. We finally snapped a fresh team photo. It was about time as the previous one was taken over two years ago! The convivial atmosphere turned serious once our annual “White Elephant” gift exchange and “Ugly Sweater” competition got underway. Ryan Torguson suffered the “White Elephant” by having five gifts taken away from him. Kay Paradiso won the prize for the best (not Ugly) holiday sweater.



At this year’s fete, we also recognized achievements of our diverse, talented, caring and committed team. From both professional and personal sides of things, it has been a year of growth for the VWG team, for which we are very proud. The assembly of this group is only possible because of our equally dedicated group of clients and their families who we are deeply privileged to serve. In these unpredictable times, one thing is certain . . . we are all better together.

## Retiring Next Year? Top 10 Retirement Resolutions for 2022

Retirement can be an exciting and somewhat daunting time for many people. Due to the pandemic and other factors, more of us are making the decision to exit the workforce. According to a Pew Research Center analysis, as of September 2021, 50.3% of U.S. adults 55 and older said they were out of the labor force due to retirement, up from 48.1% two years ago.

If you are considering retiring next year or even within the next few years, make sure you are prepared! There are many financial as well as lifestyle and emotional factors to consider. VWG is here to help!

- What is your budget? Do you know how much you spend each year and what percentage of that spending you would like to continue in retirement? For many prospective retirees the answer is 100%! Before retiring, it is important to track what you spend in a typical year. Define which of these expenses are fixed (occurring every month, quarter, or year at the same amount) and which are flexible or variable. Be sure to separate out past one-time expenses that may not repeat in retirement (such as remodeling your home or paying for your daughter's wedding), and be sure to include any one-time expenses you anticipate in the future.
- Update or initiate a retirement funding plan. The retirement plan will lay the foundation to help you understand how much you can comfortably afford to spend in retirement without running out of resources.
- Consider social security claiming strategies. Choosing when to start your social security benefits is an important decision. There are a lot of strategies available, especially if you are married. Resist the temptation to begin social security at the earliest age of 62. Claiming your benefits at 62 could result in a **30% reduction in monthly income** vs. taking it at your full retirement age (between 66 and 67 depending on when you were born). This reduction in income will last for the rest of your life! Waiting until age 70 can increase your lifetime monthly benefits by 32% vs. taking them at full retirement age.

- Understand health insurance choices and Medicare enrollment. Medicare is available when you turn 65 (benefits start at age 65, but you can enroll 3 months before or after your 65<sup>th</sup> birthday). If you are still working and over 65, your employer may or may not offer you continuing coverage depending on the plan's specifics. If you have been covered under your employer's group plan and that coverage ends (or if you are covered under your spouse's employer plan), you have an 8-month window to sign up for Medicare. **Please note: COBRA is not normally considered to be creditable coverage for Medicare major medical benefits, so people who are enrolled in COBRA and do not enroll in Medicare Part B within 8 months of turning 65 face can substantial financial penalties for the rest of their lives, even if they have months or years left on their COBRA.**
- Review your estate plan. Has your plan been updated lately, or has it been years since you had your will, trust, financial (durable) power of attorney and health care directive prepared? If you don't have an estate plan yet, put it at the top of your list!
- Check life insurance policies. You may lose employer sponsored life insurance once you retire. Do you have life insurance policies outside of your employment? Determine how much, if any, life insurance you should carry in retirement.
- Make a long-term care plan. 53% of women and 47% of men will need long-term care in their lifetimes. Can you self-insure? This should be addressed in your retirement funding plan. Could the sale of your home be used to cover some long-term care costs? Should you purchase a long-term care insurance policy? These are all issues to consider before and during retirement.
- Consider your current housing arrangement. Is your current home suitable for your "golden years"? Will you be able to get around your home easily as you age? Remember lenders are more likely to provide loans to borrowers with income, so if you're thinking about downsizing to a condo or moving to a retiree-friendly city, it might be worth making the change before you leave the workforce. This also applies if you

decide to stay in your home and would like to refinance your current mortgage.

- *Organize Your Documents, Accounts and Access.* Do you and your partner know where important documents are located and how to access them? How about passwords to secure websites and financial accounts? Organize these and keep them in a secure, shared place. Include a list of your trusted advisors and their contact information. This could be a vital resource in the event of an emergency.
- *Discuss your retirement plans with your partner.* Do you want to retire at the same time, or do you envision a staggered retirement? What does retirement really look like for each of you? How much time will you spend together? Will some part-time volunteering or consulting be part of the picture? It is surprising that some of these issues are not in full alignment between partners, even after they've been working towards this goal for years.
- *Plan your time.* Once you know that you have the financial resources to retire, make sure you think about what you want to do with your "time resources" in retirement. This might include travelling, visiting grandchildren and friends, learning a new skill, or giving back? Dedicate time to envision and prioritize your future "time" goals before you retire!

### **Year-End Tax, Retirement, Estate and Gifting Planning Checklist**

The complex financial environment of 2021 and unknowns heading into 2022 underscore the importance of year-end tax planning, retirement funding and gifting. VWG published highlights of our checklist of traditional year-end planning items in November's "Ponderings and Musings." We hope these have been serving as a catalyst for conversations with our team. You can find a link to a separate .pdf file of this checklist ([here](#)).

### Hightower Webinar: “Women. Be Prepared. Be Empowered”

Knowledge is power when it comes to being prepared for a spouse’s death or a divorce. Unfortunately, many clients don’t even know the right questions to ask about ensuring their future financial security. This can be particularly acute for women, due to the prevalence of traditional gender roles. Women often suffer the consequences of incomplete information when it comes to their rights and obligations upon death or divorce.

In Hightower’s recent webinar, “**Women. Be Prepared. Be empowered,**” Leslie Geller, a former tax and estate planning attorney, warns of the potential pitfalls many face upon the death of a spouse or divorce. She provides essential information women need to manage their financial futures. We highly recommend this presentation, and believe it will be a catalyst for valuable conversations with family, trusted advisors and spouses. ([click here for the replay](#)).

### VWG Shares their Most Memorable White Elephant Gifts

Hopefully everyone has had the experience of participating in a White Elephant gift exchange. There are many different flavors and game rules. Most have set limits on the dollar value of a gift, and on the number of times a gift can be traded until it resides with its final owner. The goal of the game should be playful interaction and amusing repartee. (If you want to know the specific rules of VWG Team’s White Elephant gift exchange, please speak to Rashmi, our rules official).

We thought it would be fun for the team to share a most memorable White Elephant gift they’ve opened. We bet you also have some very funny (and hideous) exchanges in your past. *Reminder to self, “it is better to give than receive.”*)

Suzanne – Set of Four Hand Painted Animal Ornaments

Ashley – Burrito Tortilla Wrap Blanket

Lynette – 12,000 Piece Jigsaw Puzzle

Michelle – Fat Cat Art: Famous Masterpieces Improved by a Ginger Cat

Rashmi – Bombas Socks

Kay – SodaStream Fizzi

Ona – Crown Royal Salted Caramel Flavored Whiskey

Brandi – A Llama

Ryan T. – A Gift that Won't be Taken from Me

Justin – Toilet Bowl Coffee Mug

Ryan V. – Washington Nationals World Series Hoodie

Patricia – AeroGarden Indoor Planter

Elana – Yeti Coffee Mug that I used every day of the Pandemic Shut Down

Susan – “Best Mom Ever” painting

Marnie – Orange Theory Oven Mitts

John – Notre Dame Fighting Irish Socks

Rick – Striped Bass Fish Slippers

Jeff - A “Knockoff” Yeti that burned my lip

**Happy Holidays, Best Wishes for a Superb 2022!!!**

The entire VWG team cannot thank you enough for the opportunity of working and interacting “better together” with you and your families. These relationships, and how they have grown and deepened over time, make our hard work so gratifying. Best wishes to all for a joyous holiday season. Here’s hoping that 2022 brings happiness, health, and a return to ‘normal’ for everyone!

Take care, remain safe!

VWG Wealth Management

A Hightower Company



Suzanne, Ashley, Lynette, Michelle, Rashmi, Kay, Ona, Brandi, Justin, Ryan, Ryan, Patricia, Elana, Susan, Marnie, John, Rick and Jeff

Who we are

Please reach out to us if you have any questions or comments.

VWG Wealth Management

(571) 406-4700

[vwg@hightoweradvisors.com](mailto:vwg@hightoweradvisors.com)



## Disclosures

VWG Wealth Management, A Hightower Company is a team of investment professionals registered with Hightower Securities, LLC, member FINRA and SIPC & Hightower Advisors, LLC a registered investment advisor with the SEC. All securities are offered through Hightower Securities, LLC and advisory services are offered through Hightower Advisors, LLC. This is not an offer to buy or sell securities. No investment process is free of risk and there is no guarantee that the investment process described herein will be profitable. Investors may lose all of their investments. Past performance is not indicative of current or future performance and is not a guarantee. In preparing these materials, we have relied upon and assumed without independent verification, the accuracy and completeness of all information available from public and internal sources. Hightower shall not in any way be liable for claims and make no expressed or implied representations or warranties as to their accuracy or completeness or for statements or errors contained in or omissions from them. This document was created for informational purposes only; the opinions expressed are solely those of the author, and do not represent those of Hightower Advisors, LLC or any of its affiliates. Third-party links and references are provided solely to share social, cultural and educational information. Any reference in this post to any person, or organization, or activities, products, or services related to such person or organization, or any linkages from this post to the web site of another party, do not constitute or imply the endorsement, recommendation, or favoring of VWG Wealth Management, A Hightower Company or Hightower Advisors, LLC, or any of its affiliates, employees or contractors acting on its behalf. Hightower Advisors, LLC, does not guarantee the accuracy or safety of any linked site. Hightower Advisors do not provide tax or legal advice. This material was not intended or written to be used or presented to any entity as tax advice or tax information. Tax laws vary based on the client's individual circumstances and can change at any time without notice. Clients are urged to consult their tax or legal advisor for related questions.

### VWG Wealth Management, A Hightower Company

1919 Gallows Road, Suite 330, Vienna, VA 22182  
(571) 406-4700

[Visit Our Website](#)

© 2021 Hightower. All rights reserved.

[Legal & Privacy](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)