

## From Near Perfect to Near Normal

*Kristin Byrnes, Committee Vice-Chair, Senior Manager, Investment Strategy*

Equity markets extended their ascent into early 2018 with the Dow Jones Industrial Average reaching a record high on January 26, only to quickly reverse course with a sharp decline in early February. While most of this pullback can be attributed to trading algorithms and high-frequency trading systems, it resulted in a shift in investor sentiment from one of complacency to one of uncertainty. Despite various headwinds on everyone's radar – inflation, interest rates, trade policy disruption and political instability – the equity markets are actually quite healthy. Earnings expectations continue to rise, and the global economy continues to strengthen, providing plenty of support for markets to move higher.

Nevertheless, volatility is likely to reoccur throughout the year as investors awake from the peaceful slumber of 2017 and appear to be a bit confused on what exactly they should feel uncertain about. Equity markets are naturally volatile and the current market is actually behaving as it would in a 'normal' investment environment. Goldilocks may have worn out her welcome, but there is little reason to think that her departure is indicative of trouble ahead. Perhaps we can't see the forest for the trees, but if we take a step back, I think we will find that there is plenty to feel good about.



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## **Five Considerations for Your Social Security Strategy**

*As you prepare to start claiming benefits, be sure to ask yourself these questions.*

April 19, 2018

In 2018, about 63 million Americans will receive approximately one trillion dollars in Social Security benefits. If you are planning to join that total and claim your benefits, timing, strategy and sound decisions can all help you maximize the outcome for your household. When and how you claim, your marital status, your health, and even whether you have dependents can all affect what benefits you receive.

To get the most out of your hard-earned benefits, focus on developing the right plan for you and your family. Doing so could help you enjoy a more secure and comfortable retirement.

### **Where Do I Start?**

Given the complexities involved in claiming benefits, creating a plan of action for Social Security can seem overwhelming. Fortunately, you don't have to go it alone. Your financial advisor can help you develop an appropriate retirement income strategy based on your individual circumstances – but there are a few key questions you can ask yourself beforehand to jumpstart the conversation.

### **Five Key Considerations**

Before making any decisions, it's important to consider the elements of your life that could influence your individualized Social Security strategy. To prepare for your meeting with your advisor, start thinking through these key questions:

**When are you planning to retire?** Is this date relatively fixed, or is it more flexible?

**What will your earnings look like if you continue to work past the age of 62?** Would these come from continuing in your current role, or are you considering taking on new or part-time work down the road?

**What other sources of income will you have in retirement?** In addition to your Social Security benefits, will you be receiving any pension payments, employment income (part-time work) or annuity payouts? What about any business sale proceeds, insurance policies or inheritances? And of course, consider any retirement accounts or additional savings you've built up over the years.

**How long do you expect to live?** Consider your current health as well as your family history.

**What does your family situation look like?** Are you single, married or divorced? Do you have any dependents?

As you think through these questions and begin shaping a strategy with your advisor, consider creating a free “My Social Security” account at [SSA.gov](http://SSA.gov). Within your account, you can review a statement detailing your estimated benefits as well as explore other resources for developing a sound plan.

Sources: SSA.gov



Image Source: <http://www.raymondjames.com/pointofview/the-fed-policy-outlook>



## Should You Consider a Pet Trust?

*The name may evoke stories of heirs and heiresses setting aside enormous sums for their pets, but these trusts aren't just for millionaires.*

April 19, 2018

Many pet owners see their beloved animals as a part of the family – but if something were to happen, who would make sure Spot was taken care of? Would someone provide him with needed food, water, and medicine? Would he end up at a local animal shelter?

For some, knowing the answer to these questions is worth establishing a pet trust, which are now available in all 50 states.

The term “pet trust” may evoke stories of heirs and heiresses setting aside enormous sums for their pets, but these trusts aren't just for millionaires. Whether your pet has a substantial lifespan (think birds or horses) or you simply want to ensure your furry friend will always be looked after, a trust may be the best option for ensuring your pet's continued care.

### Perks of a Pet Trust

**It provides legal assurance.** Money placed in the trust must be spent on the pet – and any amount left over when the pet dies will be distributed according to your specific instruction. The same assurance of care isn't provided if you simply leave money to a pet caretaker in a will.

**It can be customized.** You can leave explicit, detailed instructions for your pet's care.

**It applies while you're alive.** The trust will ensure your pet's care if you become unable to provide care due to age or illness, while a will would only take effect at your passing.

## Tips for Establishing a Pet Trust

**Consider funding options.** Talk to your financial advisor about your choices, including the possibility of using life insurance proceeds.

**Choose the right caregiver.** Select someone who's both willing and capable, and encourage him or her to name successors as a precaution.

**Name a separate trustee.** This can help avoid potential conflicts of interest.

**Be specific.** Determine where you want leftover assets to go when your pet dies. Bear in mind that leaving them to the pet caregiver could create a conflict of interest.

You've carefully crafted an estate plan that will provide for your loved ones – now, consider whether a trust for your animal companion fits in as a piece of that larger plan.

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## **Spring Salmon**

Ingredients:

- 2 lb Salmon Filet
- 1 tbsp Olive Oil
- 1/4 tsp Garlic Powder
- 1 tsp Dried Thyme, Dried Parsley, & Dried Basil
- 1 Green Onion sliced
- 1 tsp Sherry Vinegar



Directions:

In a small mixing bowl combine olive oil, garlic powder, thyme, parsley, basil, green onion and sherry vinegar.

Lay salmon filet on cast iron skillet skin side down. Place cast iron skillet in oven and turn on broiler high. Cook for 5 minutes.

Remove from oven and spread contents from mixing bowl on top of salmon. Place back in the oven on broil for 5-7 minutes, or until you can easily flake the flesh with a fork.

Remove from oven to allow to cool slightly (1 minute). Serve and Enjoy!

<http://www.messycuttingboard.com/spring-salmon/>

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