

LET'S TALK MONEY[®]

July/August 2026

Facing Volatile Stock Markets

After experiencing a significant loss in a particular stock or sector, an investor might become overly risk averse. The pain from the loss distorts their future decisions. Instead of evaluating opportunities logically, they steer clear of anything that reminds them of the investment that caused the pain.

Be wary of this psychological defense

If you've recently experienced major losses in a specific stock or sector, it's normal to feel a bit shaken. You're not alone. Many investors deal with the emotional impact of such downturns. However, allowing those tough experiences to influence your future choices can hinder your financial progress.

After a rough patch, it's common to become overly cautious. You might find yourself avoiding investments that even slightly resemble what caused your initial loss. This psychological defense can lead to missed opportunities. Markets are all about movement, and while it's wise to be careful, being excessively risk-averse can prevent you from making smart investments.

A better course of action

If you're feeling hurt by a stock loss (real or on paper), your best course of action is to step back and reassess. Remove your emotions from the equation. Look at the markets objectively. What you need to realize is that the investment landscape is always changing. Just because one sector took a hit doesn't mean it's doomed forever. Conduct research and consider how other companies handle similar challenges.

Approach new opportunities with an open mind. Instead of putting all your bets on a single



area, consider diversifying your portfolio—if you haven't already—to include different sectors. That way, if one area encounters volatility, you have other investments to rely on.

Look before you leap

Instead of avoiding an entire investment sector or stock altogether, review your investment goals. Does your strategy need to change going forward, or are you reacting out of fear? Evaluate opportunities fairly and rationally with your advisor, and remember that the market is cyclical. By keeping your emotions in check and focusing on sound strategies, you can navigate volatile markets more confidently.

**Asset allocation won't guarantee a profit or ensure against a loss but may help reduce volatility in your portfolio.*



Joseph F. Aragona
CLU, ChFC
Providing Personal Service &
Creative Ideas Since 1969

Aragona Financial Strategies
81 Pondfield Road, # 260
Bronxville, NY 10708

Bus: (914) 337-5494
Fax: (914) 337-1647
Email: aragonafinancial@gmail.com
Website: www.aragonafinancialstrategies.com

I am committed to helping my clients achieve their financial goals for themselves, their families & their businesses by providing them with strategies to help with asset accumulation, preservation & transfer.

Specializing in:

- Retirement & Estate Planning
- Life & Disability Insurance
- Long-term & Critical Care Insurance
- Annuities
- Employee Benefits
- Medicare Supplement, Medicare Advantage and Medicare Drug Plans

Aragona Financial Strategies and LTM Marketing Solutions, LLC are unrelated. This publication was prepared for the publication's provider by LTM Marketing Solutions, LLC, an unrelated third party. Articles are not written or produced by the named representative.

Celebrate Independence

As we prepare to celebrate Independence Day on July 4th—marking America's 250th birthday—fireworks, parades, and barbecues symbolize freedom from tyranny and the fight for self-determination. This spirit of liberty also strongly relates to personal finances: becoming debt-free is your own declaration of independence from financial burdens.

In recent years, U.S. household debt has reached record highs, with total consumer debt exceeding \$18 trillion, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. High-interest credit card balances alone surpass \$1.2 trillion, often with rates over 20%. Carrying excessive debt limits options, causes stress, and hampers true independence.

Debt management starts with a plan:

- Create a budget to track income and expenses, identifying areas to cut back.
- Prioritize high-interest debt using strategies like the debt avalanche (target highest rates first) or snowball (pay smallest balances for quick wins).
- Pay more than the minimum to reduce interest and accelerate payoff.
- Build an emergency fund to avoid new borrowing.
- Seek help if needed—credit counseling or consolidation can provide structured relief.

Just as the Founding Fathers fought for national sovereignty, take control of your finances to pursue freedom from creditors. This Independence Day, pledge to reduce your debt—your path to financial freedom and peace of mind.



Back-To-School Shopping Tips

Back-to-school shopping is an exciting but costly time for families. Households with K-12 students are expected to spend about \$850–\$900 on clothing, shoes, supplies, and electronics, according to the National Retail Federation. As costs increase, smart budgeting and saving strategies can help manage expenses without sacrificing quality.

Begin with a realistic budget and a prioritized list

Check your child's school supply list and take stock of what you already have at home—many notebooks, pens, or backpacks from last year might still be usable. Categorize needs into "must-haves" (essentials like binders and calculators) and "nice-to-haves" (new outfits or gadgets).



Shop sales and timing carefully

Back-to-school deals hit their peak in July and August—check weekly ads from stores like Target, Walmart, and Amazon. Take advantage of sales tax holidays in many states, and spread out your purchases to get the best discounts instead of buying everything at once.

Hunt for extra savings

Use coupons, cash-back apps, and credit card rewards. Buy gently used or refurbished clothing and tech from thrift stores, online marketplaces, or community groups. Think about buying in bulk for shared supplies like glue sticks or markers.

Involve the family

Establish spending limits together and promote reusing or repurposing items. These actions not only lower expenses but also help teach essential money-management skills.

With careful planning, you can outfit your student for success while staying financially comfortable.

Safe Financial Travel

Summer getaways are fun—but costly if you're not careful. Protect your money with these quick tips:

- Alert your bank/credit cards — Tell them your travel dates and destinations to avoid card freezes.
- Set a firm budget — Include flights, lodging, food, activities, souvenirs, plus a 15% buffer for surprises. Track spending daily.
- Use credit cards wisely — They offer better fraud protection than debit. Avoid public Wi-Fi for banking; use a VPN if needed. Carry some cash as backup.
- Dodge scams — Book only through trusted sites, skip wire transfers, ignore “free trip” offers or fake rentals. Verify everything.



- Monitor accounts — Check balances daily via apps and enable transaction alerts. Report issues immediately.

Plan smart, stay vigilant, and enjoy your trip worry-free—your wallet will stay safe too!

Advice For The College-Bound

You spent 18 years caring for almost every aspect of your child's life. Soon, your child will be heading to college and becoming independent. Help your child get ready for a life of independence – and responsibility – by reviewing some basic life skills.

Bank Account Basics

College-bound students need to know how to balance a checkbook, and that bounced checks cost a lot of money. Emphasize that an ATM card is not free money but merely simplifies withdrawals from a checking account.

Establish Credit

College students can benefit from establishing their own credit early in their first year. Because high interest charges add up quickly over time, teach your student to pay off any balance each month so that growing interest charges do not create a financial burden. Building good credit while in school can lead to cheaper



credit after graduation, helping students buy vehicles and rent apartments more easily.

Health Insurance

Before your child leaves, ensure you are not automatically billed for college-sponsored health insurance. Usually, you can include or keep your children on your health insurance policy until they turn 26.

Let Go

Teaching your child the basics of money now will help you let go and see your young adult flourish.

Last Will And Testament

A last will and testament (commonly called a will) is a legal document that details your wishes for how your assets—such as property, money, and personal belongings—should be distributed after your death. It gives you control over your legacy, prevents confusion, and spares loved ones from relying on state intestacy laws, which might not match your preferences.

Key basics of a will include:

- Testator — You, the person creating the will, must be at least 18 (in most states) and of sound mind (understanding the document's purpose, your assets, and beneficiaries).
- Beneficiaries — Individuals, charities, or organizations you name to receive your property. You can make specific bequests and include a residuary clause for remaining assets.
- Executor — The trusted person you appoint to manage your estate, pay debts/taxes, and distribute assets during probate.
- Guardians — If you have minor children, designate a guardian to care for them.
- Validity requirements — The will must typically be written, signed by you, and witnessed by at least two disinterested people (not beneficiaries). Some states require notarization.



A will only covers probate assets; jointly owned property or accounts with beneficiaries pass outside it. While simple wills can be created with online tools, consult an estate attorney for complex situations to ensure enforceability.

Automating Monthly Investments

Large swings in investment values may make headlines, but trying to predict market volatility is generally not a successful strategy. Instead, a slow-and-steady investing approach may seem boring, but it can help you capitalize on market fluctuations as you work toward long-term financial goals. Dollar-cost averaging* can be part of this strategy.

Disciplined Investing

Dollar-cost averaging is as much about discipline as it is an investing technique. When you use dollar-cost averaging, you invest the same amount in the same investments at regular intervals. For example, you might contribute \$100 twice a month to your retirement account, allocating \$50 to equity investments and \$50 to fixed income. If each share costs, say, \$1, then you would buy 50 shares of one asset and 50 of the other.

Dollar-cost averaging means regularly investing a set amount of money into the same investments on a consistent schedule.

Buying the same dollar amount of any investment doesn't, however, mean you are buying the same number of shares each time. When stock prices go up, you get fewer shares for your \$50. So, if stock prices double to \$2 per share, you would buy 25 shares. And if fixed income shares declined to 75 cents a share, your \$50 would buy almost 67 shares. In other words, you buy more securities when prices decline and fewer when prices increase.

Emotionless Investing

Why does this matter? If you were making investment decisions daily, it might be easy to be influenced by current market trends rather than future ones. Consequently, some investors tend to make decisions after the fact, buying when prices are high and selling when they're low.



Dollar-cost averaging removes emotion from investing, helping you stay consistent in your approach despite short-term ups and downs and focus on long-term goals.

** Investing regular amounts steadily over time (dollar-cost averaging) may lower your average per-share cost, but this investment method will not guarantee a profit or protect you from a loss in declining markets. Effectiveness requires continuous investment, regardless of fluctuating prices. You should consider your ability to continue buying through periods of low prices.*

This publication is prepared by LTM Marketing Solutions, LLC for the use of the sender and not written nor produced by the named representative. Content in this material is not intended to market or sell any specific products or services, but rather provide general information about the subject matter covered. This content is not intended as legal or tax advice. All individuals, including those involved in the estate-planning process, are advised to meet with their tax and legal professionals. We do not endorse or guarantee the content or services of any website mentioned in this newsletter. We encourage you to review the privacy policy of each website you visit. Limitations, restrictions and other rules and regulations apply to many of the financial and insurance products and concepts presented in this newsletter, and they may differ according to individual situations. The publisher and sponsor do not assume liability for financial decisions based on the newsletter's contents. Great care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the newsletter copy prior to publication, however, markets and tax information can change suddenly. Whole or partial reproduction of Let's Talk Money® without the written permission of the publisher is forbidden.

©2026, LTM Marketing Solutions, LLC

P-5268 om025632 A

We Value Your Input...

Your feedback is very important to us. If you have any questions about the subjects covered here, or suggestions for future issues, please don't hesitate to call. You'll find our number on the front of this newsletter. It's always a pleasure to hear from you.