



## Now & Then

The following piece is from Dave Goetsch, Executive Producer of the hit TV series, *The Big Bang Theory*. He reflects on his investment experience in the recent market downturn and contrasts his new perspective with memories of the 2008-2009 financial crisis.

**Seeing all the recent headlines about the sudden downturn in the stock market has transported me back to February of 2009, when I was close to despair. It's striking how different I feel now.**

In February 2009, the stock market was down around 50% from its high, and everyone seemed to feel like the sky was falling. I was familiar with this state of panic because my relationship to the financial markets was that I didn't trust them.

They were always going up and down in ways no one could predict, and I couldn't trust those folks who said that they could anticipate what was going to happen. So when the market went down, I went down with it—sinking into a depression, knowing there was nothing I could do.

*What a difference nine years make.* I haven't changed because the stock market rebounded. I changed because I learned that there was a different way to think about investing. I was right not to trust those people who thought they could predict what was going to happen in the markets, but I was wrong in thinking that there was nothing to do. I've learned that I can have a great investment experience if I just accept a few simple truths.

I have to understand the uncertainty of the market. The stock market, as measured by the S&P 500 Index, has returned about 10% per year over the last 90 years,<sup>1</sup> but there are very few individual years in which it has ever actually returned that amount. In fact, how many of those 90 years do you think the S&P 500 was up more than 20% or down more than 20% for that year? The answer is 40. Astounding, right? I wish somebody had explained that to me decades ago. Then I would have known to look at stock market returns in terms of decades—not years, months, days, or hours. I would understand that so many of those articles and cable news pieces are just noise, designed to keep an audience obsessed and unsettled.

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In order to be a long-term investor, you have to have a long time horizon. This can be hard to remember when you're being assaulted by noise, but if you can stay strong, the results are stunning. By results, I don't mean the investment returns, which hopefully are good. The return I'm talking about is how I feel every day. I worry less—not just about the future, but also about the present. Of course, I know that there are no guarantees when it comes to investing, but I feel like I'm going to be okay. I have a plan.

There's no way I could've done this without a financial advisor. I needed someone who could not just talk me through what my asset allocation should be, but also help me work through how I felt about investing and what exactly I could do to change my perspective.

*I was a mess nine years ago. Now, my outlook is totally different. The markets haven't changed; they still go up and down. The difference is, I don't anymore.*



Dave Goetsch  
Executive Producer, *The Big Bang Theory*

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