



Drawdown Patrol Investing

Upside Capture Through Downside Hedging

Our approach is designed to produce what every investor wants, potential for growth and income while defending against their most feared risks. Today's backdrop requires different thinking; here is ours.

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Why Invest?

To meet future spending needs, right? It may be spending by us. It may be the spending of our heirs or favorite causes. Either way, putting today's dollars under the mattress is not going to get it done.

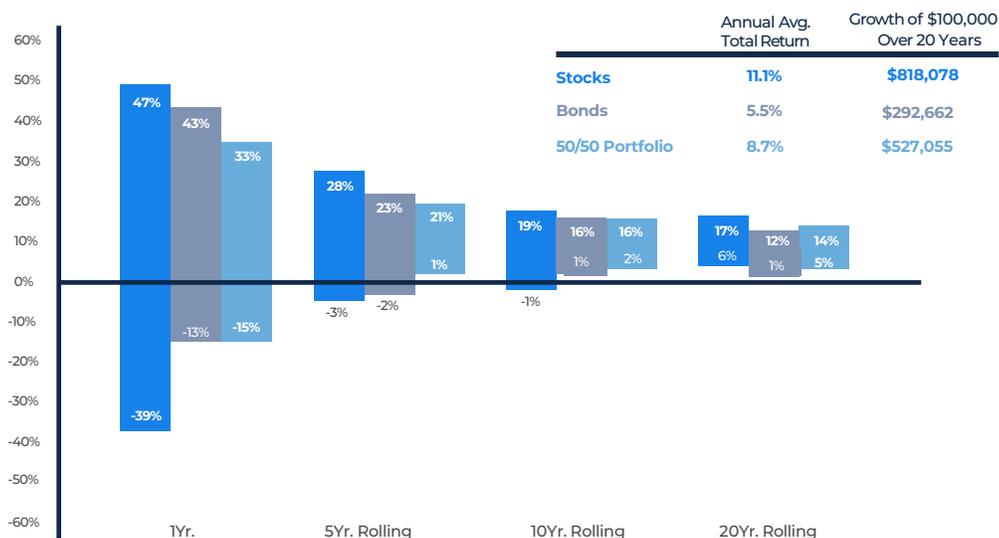
Investors often underestimate their time horizon and the compounding power that can bring. We design portfolios to help harness that power, meet client needs, and empower advisors to deliver consistently around the following three questions:

- **Am I going to be ok?**
- **Can I maintain my family's quality of life?**
- **Can I improve it?**

For those consistently investing, short-term ups and downs have added up to long-term gains in every 20 year period in U.S. history.

Range Of Stock, Bond, And Blended Total Returns

Annual Total Returns, 1950-2022



Source: JP Morgan

“In the short-run, the market is a voting machine...but in the long-run, the market is a weighing machine.” - Benjamin Graham

What Are the Risks?

The primary investing dangers we worry about generally fall into one of two categories:

Longevity Risk - outliving your money

This threat is sneaky, and hard to recognize in the moment. An apparent sense of security today is exchanged for a dangerous longer-term shortfall.

Drawdown Risk - losing your money

Can strike without warning. Easy to spot in hindsight, hard to swallow, and should be avoided because of... math:

Don't Dig A Hole

Drawdown	% To Recover	Years To Recover*
5%	5.3%	0.67
10%	11.1%	1.37
20%	25.0%	2.90
30%	42.9%	4.63
40%	66.7%	6.64
50%	100.0%	9.01

The ability to reduce drawdown can shorten recovery time

Source: Aptus Research

*Assumes recovery = 8% Net CAGR

Conceptual Illustration

Information presented above is for illustrative purposes only and should not be interpreted as actual performance of any investor's account. These figures are entirely assumed to illustrate the concept of drawdown impact and years to recover in equities. As these are not actual results and completely assumed, they should not be relied upon for investment decisions. Actual results of individual investors will differ due to many factors, including individual investments and fees, client restrictions, and the timing of investments and cash flows.

"The most important job is to strike the appropriate balance between offense and defense."

Howard Marks



Current Environment

Traditionally, lowering risk has meant owning more bonds and fewer stocks. The 60/40 portfolio has been great for the past 20 years. Let's take a look below...the 60% from stocks has gone up but look at the 40% going to bonds! Not everyone realizes this; the more conservative asset (bonds) known for stability has actually returned as much as stocks!

Vanguard Long-Term Bond Index vs S&P 500 Index Total Returns 01/01/2000 to 09/30/2023

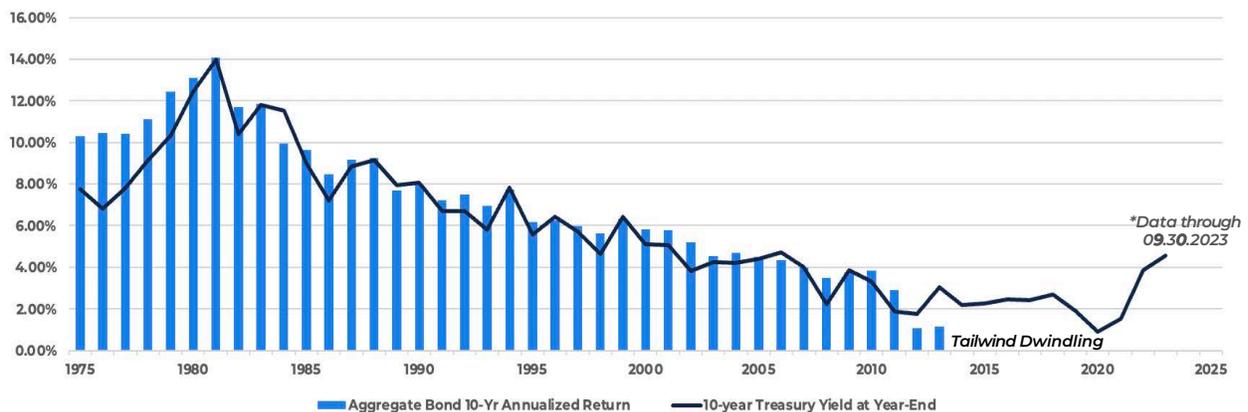


Remember, falling interest rates lead to higher bond prices and vice versa. Bonds juiced portfolio returns because interest rates fell. Bonds bought 10 years ago with a 5% coupon became worth more to someone else, when rates fell throughout the decade.

Can Bonds Beat Stocks in the *Next 20 Years, Again?*

With yields moving higher off of all-time lows, it's critical to understand that bonds > stocks will not likely repeat itself over the next 20 years. The reality of rising yields impacts *nearly every portfolio*.

10-Year Treasury Note Yields Have Historically Been A Solid Estimate For Future Returns



Source: Bloomberg, Aptus Research

How we build portfolios, to address longevity risk and explicitly manage drawdown risk, is the heart of what differentiates our approach. That conversation starts with understanding where returns come from...

How Are Returns Generated?

Returns are generated in one of three ways:

Yield : Dividends + Interest

Growth : Annualized Improvement

Valuation : Changing Investor Appetite

Decade	Yield	+	Earnings Growth	+	Valuation Change	=	Annual Returns
1900s	3.9%		4.7%		0.9%		9.5%
1920s	4.2%		2.0%		-2.9%		3.4%
1920s	3.7%		5.6%		4.6%		13.9%
1930s	3.1%		-5.7%		1.6%		-1.0%
1940s	4.2%		9.9%		-6.4%		7.8%
1950s	4.1%		3.9%		10.1%		18.1%
1960s	3.1%		5.5%		-1.2%		7.3%
1970s	3.4%		9.9%		-8.0%		5.3%
1980s	3.4%		4.4%		8.6%		16.4%
1990s	1.7%		7.7%		8.2%		17.6%
2000s	1.5%		0.6%		-2.9%		-0.8%
2010s	1.9%		10.6%		0.7%		13.3%
2020s	1.5%		11.1%		-5.1%		7.6%
Avg. Contribution to Return	3.1%		5.4%		0.6%		9.1%
% Contribution to Return	33.6%		59.4%		7.0%		100.0%

Source: Aptus Capital, John Bogle & Robert Shiller, Data as of 9/30/2023

Here's a simple example of each:

You buy a share of company ABC for \$10. Company ABC generates \$2 a share of earnings. You paid a valuation of 5 times (5x) earnings for your investment. Simple example, but hopefully brings clarity.

Yield

This piece is the easiest to quantify as it's simply the return of capital on your investment. Sticking to our example, if Company ABC pays a dividend of \$0.50, that's a 5% return on your \$10 investment. As the prior chart shows, dividends have been a more reliable source of return than growth and valuations.

Growth

Let's revisit your investment and go back to our starting valuation of 5x earnings. Recapping, you paid \$10/share with company ABC generating \$2/share in earnings. Well, good news. Company ABC just landed their biggest customer, earnings are now \$3/share. If valuations remain the same (5x earnings), Company ABC now trades at \$15/share... a 50% return on your initial investment, not bad.

Valuation Change

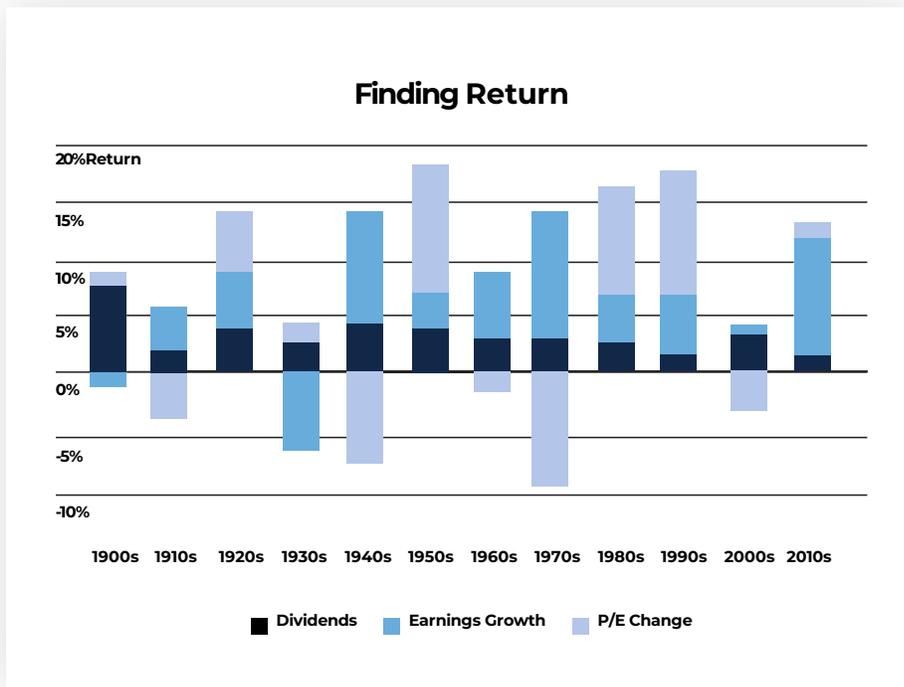
There are rumors floating about Company ABC and its potential over the next year. Nothing has actually changed, but people's expectations are rising. The rising expectations have caused the stock price to adjust to \$12 a share. You bought in at a valuation of 5x earnings and now, the same company with the same \$2 of earnings, is trading for 6x earnings—a valuation change that generated a 20% return on your investment. Valuation change has been the most fleeting source of return, and over time, it matters less than you might think.

"The market's not a very accommodating machine; it won't provide high returns just because you need them."

-Peter Bernstein

Finding Return

Of the 3 drivers of return we place the highest emphasis on understanding yield and growth. If we do a decent job on yield and growth, we view positive valuation change as icing on the cake.



Source: Aptus Research via Robert Shiller, Bloomberg

Control what you can control. Growth can go negative, valuation change can go negative, **dividends paid cannot.**

Yield

Today's market has us focused on consistent and repeatable yield vs high absolute yield. Our focus is on the **quality** of yield. As famously quoted by Raymond DeVoe of Legg Mason. *"More money has been lost reaching for yield than at the point of a gun."*

Growth

An understanding of growth at the individual security level is important to portfolio construction overall, driving what to own and what to avoid. Growth cannot be measured in a vacuum, as we need to address valuation, quality, and momentum to understand the opportunity to compound capital.

The goal is not a crystal ball into the "best", but a clear process for avoiding the worst, and a sell discipline to identify change. A few filters we use...

In Search of Total Return

The Potential Of Compounding Capital

+ Business Growth

- Growth In Sales
- Growth In EBIT
- Growth In Margins
- Growth In Earnings
- Growth In Dividends
- Extensive Opportunities to Reinvest FCF Organically or Through M&A

+ Valuation

- Price-to-Earnings
- Dividende Yield
- EV/EBITDA
- Price-to-Book

+ Profitability

- Enduring, Predictable
- High ROE and FCF
- Strong ROIC
- Strong Balance Sheets
- Down Market Performance

+ Momentum

- Trading Above Its 50-day
- Moving Average
- Proximity to 52-Week Highs
- 1-Year Relative Performance
- 6- Month Relative Performance

Our Portfolios Within This Framework

This Y + G framework drives decisions at the asset class level down to the individual security level. Our goal is to compound capital, and today's market pushes allocations towards stocks and away from bonds. But doesn't that increase the volatility in our portfolios?

Enter... The Drawdown Patrol

“The essence of investment management is the management of risks, not the management of returns. Well-managed portfolios start with this precept.”

Benjamin Graham

We view a portfolio as a fragile package in our hands, to get from point A to point B. Rather than depend on a smooth ride to our destination, we wrap the package with layers of hedging to defend against the market’s inevitable bumps along the way.

How we get from point A to point B matters in enhancing outcome.

Our first layer is diversification. This isn’t all that different.

It’s the additional layers we include in the portfolios that makes our approach different. It changes the math and gives our investors the comfort of risk management over and above diversification.

We balance risk and returns for three reasons:

- 1. To be able to allocate to areas of higher return (stocks)**
- 2. To reduce drawdown and the emotions that come along with it**
- 3. To turn market drawdowns into opportunity**

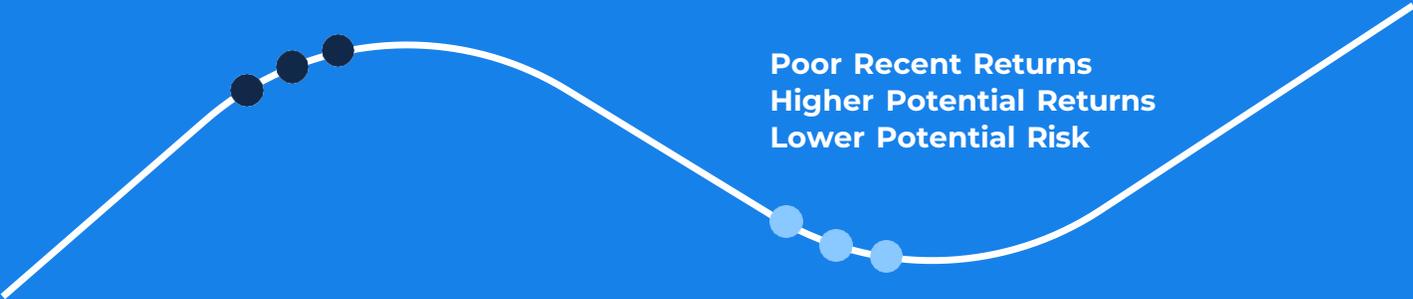
Lower prices can lead to higher returns in the future, but that only matters if you have cash to take advantage of it. Let’s dig in...

Valuations Matter

Let's ingrain this simple concept in our minds: Today's valuations impact tomorrow's return in the stock market.

Markets oscillate from periods of higher valuations to lower valuations. High valuations tend to mean lower future returns with higher risks, a **bad** combination.

The opposite is also true. Low valuations tend to mean higher future returns with lower risks, a **good** combination. This simple concept is critical when thinking about the Drawdown Risk mentioned earlier.



Strong Recent Returns
Lower Potential Returns
Higher Potential Risk

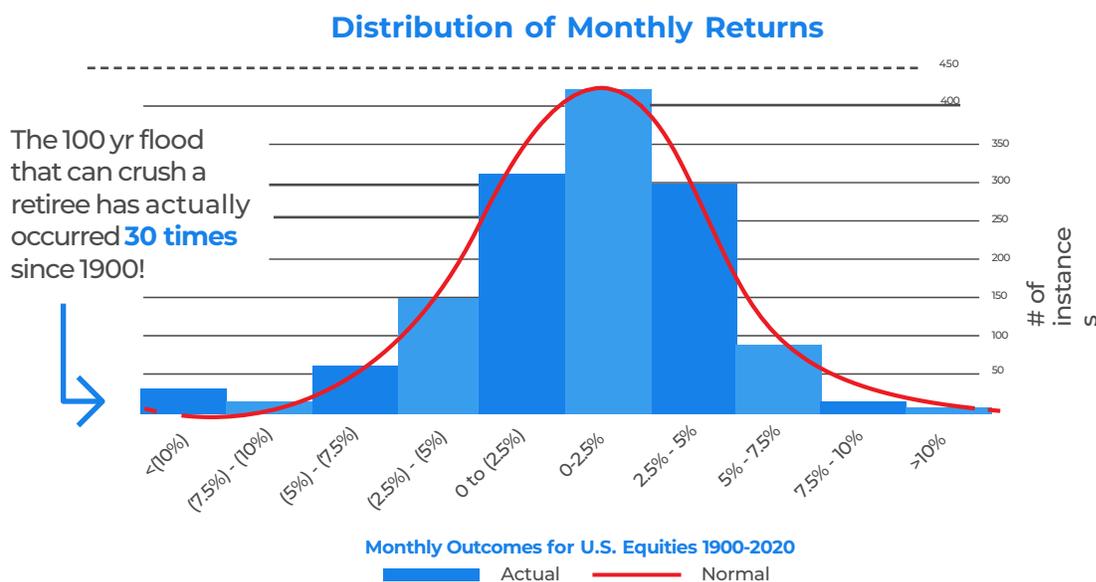
Poor Recent Returns
Higher Potential Returns
Lower Potential Risk

We believe deploying cash in a market priced at 15 times earnings is far more attractive than one priced at 25 times. The trick is having cash to deploy when that's the case.

Managing Drawdown

Drawdown risk doesn't sneak up on you; it smacks you in the face. Nothing gets a client more uncomfortable than watching account values drop.

History has shown how hard it is to stick with things if it means riding the market's waves without a plan to protect capital. We provide that plan. It's **peace of mind** through portfolio construction that explicitly attempts to manage drawdown risk. We can't avoid volatility, but we can be positioned to take the sting out of severe market drawdowns.



Source: Robert Shiller, Aptus Research

This is designed to capture more of the good and less of the bad while maintaining explicit focus on avoiding drawdown.

Our portfolios all contain active hedges to protect against disaster. For you statisticians out there, disaster could also be referred to as left tail market events. Our aim is to chop off left tails, which happen more than most expect and leave mathematical and behavioral wreckage behind.

Turning Volatility into Your Opportunity

The benefit of blending diversification, hedging, and long volatility exposure is that you are positioned to chop the left tail and avoid serious drawdown.

But the real benefit is how it can **create capital** at the precise time that a market decline is testing most investors.

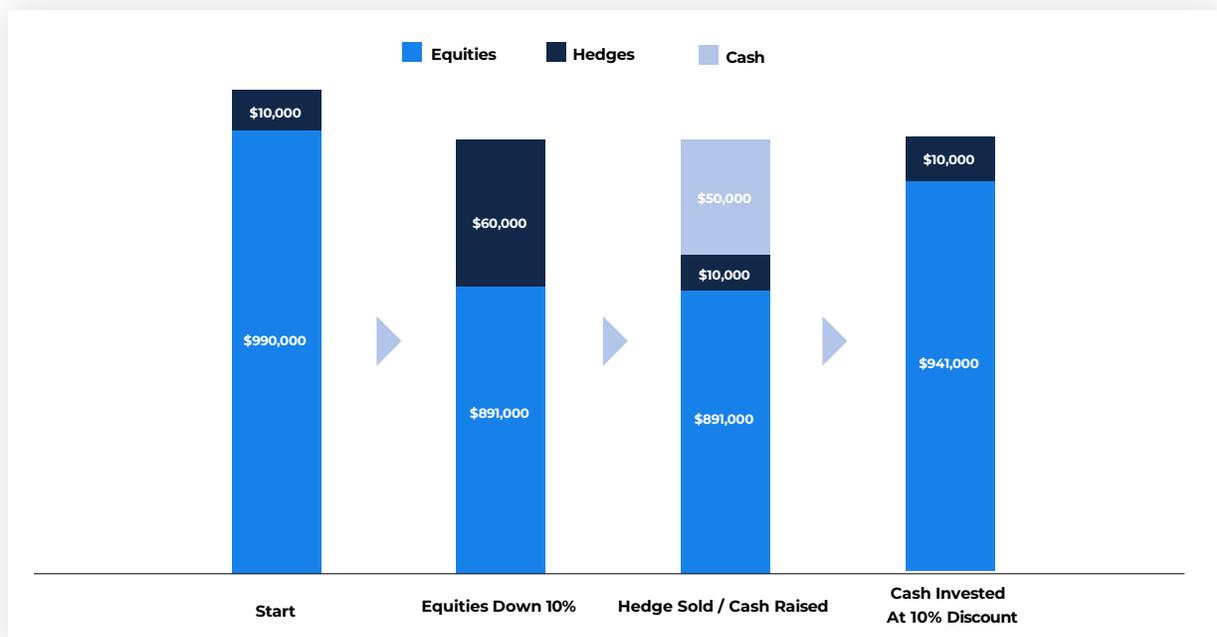
We believe that a focus on risk management can lead to higher returns, and scour each corner of a portfolio to make volatility our friend. In other words, **we manage risk to pursue higher return**. Everyone wants to “buy low” but sitting in a 2% money market waiting for prices to drop is not a formula for success.

If markets drop 20%, the forward return potential goes up. That’s great for the younger investor adding money monthly. It’s not so good for folks already in retirement.

Unless, the drawdown creates the capital to deploy back into a market when the forward-looking opportunity is much better. Next, a hypothetical illustration of how our added layers of protection have the potential to create capital as prices drop.

Buying the Dip is Great in Theory But You Need Cash Available To Do It

To bring this all together, we deploy a series of strategies that strive to defend against the most visible risk (drawdown). This hedging opens the door to pursue higher embedded returns at the initial allocation and provides cash to buy into short term market dips.



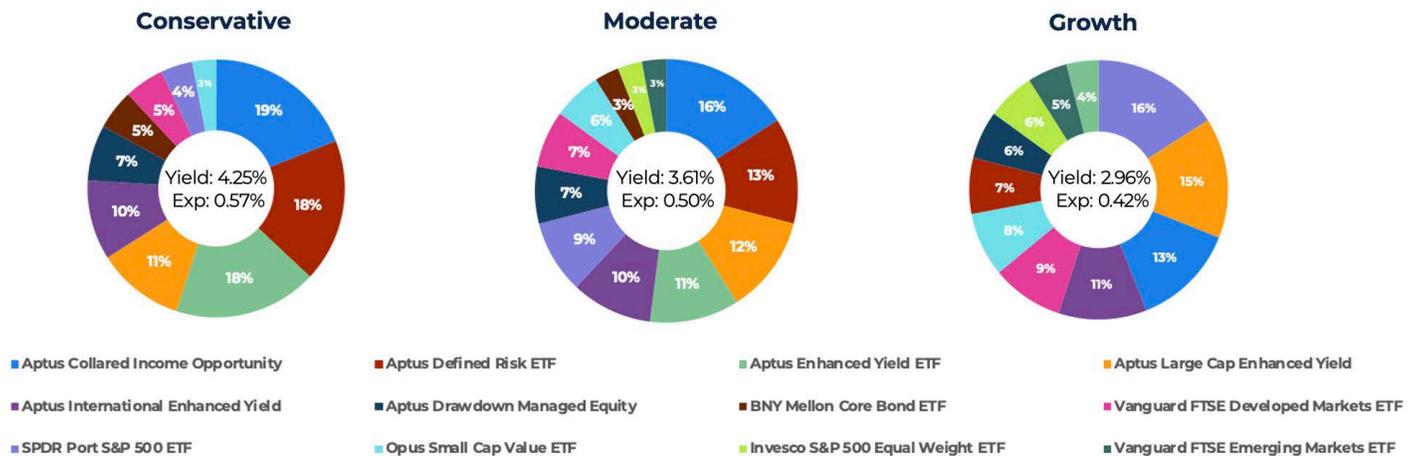
Conceptual Illustration

Information presented above is for illustrative purposes only and should not be interpreted as actual performance of any investor's account. These figures are entirely assumed to illustrate the concept of hedging during an assumed 10% drawdown in equities. As these are not actual results and completely assumed, they should not be relied upon for investment decisions. Actual results of individual investors will differ due to many factors, including individual investments and fees, client restrictions, and the timing of investments and cash flows.

What This Looks Like for Clients

Once the advisor does the hard work of helping clients organize their financial lives, and determines the return stream that defines a successful outcome, they can select from a series of models matched to client needs, risk tolerance, and risk capacity.

The resulting portfolio is low cost, tax efficient, risk-mitigated, and streamlined. A blend of passive and active ETFs and/or individual securities to deliver a portfolio blend designed to adapt and adjust to the market environment.



Holdings as of 09/30/2023 Please see attached disclosures.

Our advisor partners have shown that an environment of unmatched service, improved economics, and consistent communication can be transformational for both their clients and their practices. We take pride in helping advisors shepherd clients from Point A to Point B and beyond, and hope sharing our risk-managed approach helps bring peace of mind to all involved.

Impact Series Performance (as of 09/30/23)	September	Q3	YTD	1 Yr	3 Yr	5 Yr	Inception 1/1/2017	Equities	Fixed	Hedged Eq.
iShares Allocation ETF 30:70	-2.94%	-2.91%	2.67%	6.75%	-1.00%	2.08%	2.97%	30%	70%	0%
Aptus Impact Series : Conservative	-2.87%	-2.24%	2.13%	6.13%	-0.36%	2.25%	4.00%	30%	40%	30%
iShares Allocation ETF 40:60	-3.16%	-2.94%	3.69%	9.00%	0.25%	2.81%	3.88%	40%	60%	0%
Aptus Impact Series: Moderate	-3.29%	-2.59%	2.98%	8.54%	2.05%	2.68%	5.62%	40%	30%	30%
iShares Allocation ETF 60:40	-3.48%	-3.24%	5.98%	12.81%	2.66%	4.05%	5.51%	60%	40%	0%
Aptus Impact Series: Growth	-3.57%	-2.67%	4.98%	12.11%	3.47%	3.24%	6.80%	50%	20%	30%
iShares Allocation ETF 80:20	-3.99%	-3.57%	7.37%	16.84%	5.06%	5.22%	7.10%	80%	20%	0%

The performance data represents past performance & does not guarantee future results. Investment return & principal value of an investment will fluctuate, so an investor's shares may be worth more or less than original cost when sold. Current performance may be higher or lower than quoted performance. Returns are expressed in US dollars, & periods >1 year are annualized. Returns are calculated net of all fund fees and expenses. Net returns shown include the deduction of the highest sub-advisory fee charged to our clients in sub-advisory arrangements, 0.15%. This is the maximum subadvisory fee paid during the time periods presented, and individual accounts may pay a lower effective fee. For our fee schedule please refer to Form ADV 2A, which is available upon request. Actual client results may be lower based on imposition of additional advisory fees, platform fees, & custodial fees charged by firms. iShares Core Allocation ETFs are designed as diversified core portfolios based on the specific risk consideration of the investor. For performance through most recent month end, please call (251) 517-7198 or visit impact-series.com/fact-sheets

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Portfolio holdings information as September 30, 2023. There are no assurances that the specific securities listed will remain in the portfolio. Asset allocation and portfolio holdings may differ from the model among accounts in the composite. Aptus employs a diversification strategy using a combination of tactical and strategic, active and index-based exchange traded funds to represent specific asset classes. These representations should not be considered a recommendation to buy or sell an ETF. As with all investments, ETFs have risks. For more information or a prospectus, please contact your investment advisor.

The impact series benchmarks are the iShares core allocation ETFs. iShares core asset allocation ETFs are designed as diversified core portfolios based on the specific risk consideration of the investor. Each iShares core allocation fund offers exposure to US stock, international stock, and bond at fixed weights and holds an underlying portfolio of iShares core funds. Investors choose the portfolio that aligns with their specific risk consideration. iShares core allocation ETFs offer investments to meet a conservative (iShares core conservative allocation ETF), moderate (iShares core moderate allocation ETF), growth (iShares core growth allocation ETF), and aggressive (iShares core aggressive allocation ETF). Source: Blackrock. The volatility (standard deviation) of the impact series may be greater than that of the benchmark.

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