



COMMUNITY

Your Financial Wellbeing: Time for a Check Up

A Year Like No Other

By [Jill Fopiano](#), President & CEO at O'Brien Wealth Partners



2020 was a crazy year, to say the least. Work became remote, kids moved home, daily routines went out the window. The global pandemic generated levels of stress and challenge that we have never faced before. On top of that, we experienced the worst market decline since the Great Depression. 2021 has brought some renewed activity, if not yet normalcy. Work is now hybrid, and many kids are back in school. People have begun to focus on issues beyond maintaining their personal and mental health—including important financial questions they may have put on the back burner.

Where are we now?

Like many of you, we are continuing to process all of these events emotionally. However, as financial advisors, we are responsible for guiding our clients toward financial wellness. For most of them, that means being confident that their money is working for them in the right ways. They value having a partner that understands their complete picture and communicates regularly in good times and bad.

Throughout the pandemic, our advisors continued to meet regularly—virtually—with clients. Some clients questioned whether the pandemic's extreme uncertainty was a good time to pull back from the markets. Others wanted to stay the course and stick with their long-range plan. A few wondered if the market selloff should prompt a portfolio rebalance. We listened to their concerns. Through our experience and wisdom, we were able to provide the necessary perspective to ensure their financial health over the long term.

Opportunity is knocking.

The gradual re-opening of our world presents opportunity, both on the investment front and in making smart financial planning moves. As we all try to establish a “new normal,” now is a great time to reassess your personal financial roadmap to see what might be missing.

All those Zoom conversations with clients during the height of the pandemic produced many good questions. Since you might be on the same wavelength, or wondering about your own financial ‘wellness,’ we thought we’d share the most

common questions we heard.

1. Given how expensive the markets are, should I be invested?

Some investors worry that the current bull market is a bubble. But bubbles are indistinguishable from bull markets before they burst. The depth of and timing of a market dip are also unknowns, as is the timing of a rebound. Since stocks are the primary growth engine in most portfolios, we recommend staying invested – through bubbles, dips, and rebounds.

- Why is it important to stay invested?

With so much financial, political, and societal change still afoot, many people feel unsettled. And these feelings can affect how they invest their money. But uncertainty is usually short-lived. A good investment plan focuses on the longer term—and uses diversification to limit shorter-term negatives caused by uncertainty. Over time, this approach has shown remarkably consistent growth trends for the economy and financial markets.

- Am I still doing the right things for my retirement plan?

The pandemic prompted many people to rethink their priorities. Work longer or retire earlier? Recalibrate my work and family time balance? Any new choices may affect your current path to retirement, making now the right time to revisit your plan

- I hear a lot about stimulus checks and potential tax increases. What can this mean for me?

We don't yet know whether or how much taxes may rise. Nor can we predict the amount and level of any future stimulus. Having a flexible, long-range financial plan readies you for change and unanticipated events.

- What about cryptocurrencies and how much they've appreciated? Am I missing out?

The proliferation of cryptocurrencies and their huge value fluctuations has been all over the news. In fact, this is a complicated market with investment opportunity—and pretty significant risk. It may be tempting to follow the latest

investment with what seem like outsized returns, but owning a group of multiple investments that zig and zag at different times is the best long-run bet.

The markets never sleep

If you are like most O'Brien clients, you've been absorbed with health concerns over the past 15+ months—just not those of a financial nature. With the Covid-19 Delta variant, that focus remains keen for us all.

At the same time, much of our world has reopened. The financial markets never closed. Planning for long-term life goals remains critical for us all. Now really is the time for a personal financial check-up. That's the first step toward true wellness.

I've taken more of a "big picture" approach here to the topics on many people's minds. In coming blogs, I'll discuss more specifics along the path to financial wellness. I'll also dive deeper into the latest financial ideas and investments everyone seems to be talking about. Stay tuned.

You may have more questions now, and I'm happy to answer them. Feel free to contact me at jfopiano@obrienwp.com.

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Jill Fopiano, **President & CEO at O'Brien Wealth Partners**

Jill A. Fopiano, President & CEO

Jill Fopiano joined O'Brien Wealth Partners LLC in September 2012 as a Principal. In October 2016 she became the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Investment Officer, and majority owner of the firm.

Possessing more than twenty years of experience at major global banks, Jill brings unique perspective and capability in both institutional investments and private banking. Jill's global financial career at Citi and US Trust spanned alternative investments, trading, and financial planning and wealth management. She is now dedicated to leading an independent wealth management firm providing institutional quality investment management and integrated financial planning, with an intimate client experience possible only at a boutique firm.

As a Chartered Financial Analyst, Jill is a member of the CFA Institute and the Boston Society of Securities Analysts. Jill is also a Certified Financial Planner™ and an Accredited Domestic Partnership Advisor (ADPA™). Jill holds an MBA from the Yale School of Management and a BA in French from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Jill and her two sons live in Brookline and Orleans, MA.

Areas of Expertise:

Wealth Management, Investment Advisory, Strategic Financial Planning, Retirement Planning, Estate Planning.
Financial Empowerment of Women

Organizations/Accomplishments:

Jill's involvement in the local arts community has included the Advisory Board of A.R.T., the Board of Overseers of the Boston Conservatory, and the Board of Directors of Opera Boston. As a member of the Women President's Organization, Jill is also committed to mentoring and advancing women owned businesses in the Boston area. In her free time she is an avid baseball mom and can sometimes be found as a stand-in third base coach at her son's Little League games.