In my May column, I focused on books that planners read themselves to enhance their own financial planning work, as well as those that they sometimes recommend to clients. This column focuses on books that NAPFA planners recommend to clients, as well as blogs that they find helpful in their day-to-day practice. Note that several of these books and blogs are written by NAPFA members, so they have special resonance for how to grow and manage a Fee-Only business and work with clients on a Fee-Only basis.

Books financial planners are recommending to clients


I have recommended this book by a NAPFA member to prospective inquiries who want to do some pre-planning preparation on their own so that they’re best prepared to work with an advisor. There are three parts to the book, and my favorite is the excellent self-assessment questions. There are tips on choosing the right advisor and a good primer about key points in different areas of financial planning (insurance, tax, estate, etc).

—Jennifer Lazarus, Lazarus Financial Planning

“The One-Page Financial Plan: A Simple Way to Be Smart About Your Money,” by Carl Richards

We love Carl Richards’ back-of-the-napkin illustrations that make personal finance so easy for anyone to understand. A fast and fun read! It also includes important questions clients should ask themselves and their advisor as they make important financial decisions.

—Carla LaFleur, PR coordinator for Halpern Financial, Inc.

“Coin: The Irreverent Yet Practical Guide to Money Management for Recent College Graduates,” by Judy McNary

This is a great book to recommend to recent college grads. At 80 pages, “Coin” provides nearly-instant gratification for short attention spans. Covering spending, savings, debt, taxes, gifts, loans, and insurance, it’s a mini-financial-plan-in-a-box. More specifically, McNary covers the little behavioral choices that turn into big bad habits, or good ones, over a few decades.

—Holly Thomas, Holly P. Thomas, LLC

“Beyond Financial Aid: Secrets to College Affordability,” by Fred Amrein

An easy to read book that explains the various college financial decision points throughout the entire college process. The book explains what to look for when developing a college list to the different methods of loan repayment. College financial aid and loan repayment have their own language. This book gives your clients the insight they need to make better decisions.

—Jennifer Lazarus, Lazarus Financial Planning

“Seeking Wisdom: From Darwin to Munger,” by Peter Bevelin

I often recommend or give this book to clients. It explores our irrational thought processes around money and investing and how to overcome them. I originally found the book on Charlie Munger’s website, where he sells “Poor Charlie’s Almanack.”

—Peter North, North & Company LLC

“The 5 Mistakes Every Investor Makes and How to Avoid Them: Getting Investing Right,” by Peter Mallouk

This easy-to-understand primer on investing traps should be required reading! Much better to be armed with quality information from a fiduciary perspective that puts the investor’s needs first, rather than learning by trial and error. Great graphics and funny quotes make this topic totally accessible and even entertaining. A great gift for new investors.

—Carla LaFleur, PR coordinator for Halpern Financial, Inc.

“The Investment Answer,” by Daniel Goldie

We give this book to every client. It’s a short read and very clear. It isn’t too supportive of alternative investments, which we use a lot, but it’s so good on the basics that we still give it out.

—Rick Kahler, Kahler Financial Group

“Low Fee Socially Responsible Investing: Investing in Your Worldview on Your Terms,” by Tom Novak

This book contains guidance on how to build simple, customized stock portfolios that reflect a particular worldview. The portfolios can be constructed, implemented, and maintained passively using low-cost brokerage platforms that provide for fractional share ownership (e.g. Motif Investing, Folio Investing). In a world where investment returns are less certain, lower investment fees are more and more
important for the investor and advisor.
—Jennifer Lazarus, Lazarus Financial Planning

“Low Fee Vegan Investing: Taking Veganism to the Next Level,” by Tom Novak

Although the general area of sustainable investing has grown significantly in recent years, no mutual funds (low-cost or otherwise) exist to help vegans bring their investment dollars in alignment with their values. Vegans, vegetarians, and investors supportive of healthy eating and healthy living lifestyles should find this book informative.
—Jennifer Lazarus, Lazarus Financial Planning

“Conscious Finance: Uncover Your Hidden Money Beliefs and Transform the Role of Money in Your Life,” by Rick Kahler and Kathleen Fox

Many Fee-Only planners give this handbook-style book to their new clients to help them understand the process of financial planning. It combines the emotional and traditional parts of the financial planning process.
—Jennifer Lazarus, Lazarus Financial Planning

“The Soul of Money: Reclaiming the Wealth of Our Inner Resources,” by Lynne Twist

Having personally benefited from reading this book, I have been recommending it to others for years. The appreciative feedback I have heard speaks to the power of her message. It’s a book about our relationship with money, exploring ideas of sufficiency and scarcity and the state of having and being enough, striving yet being liberated from the unconditional drive for more, recognizing abundance and inner resources, expressing our values and our generosity.
—Jennifer Lazarus, Lazarus Financial Planning

Blogs and newsletters

“Nerd’s Eye View” and “The Kites Report,” by Michael Kitces (kitces.com)

He is on top of all the issues relevant to our practice and explains things at a very deep level if you wish to go there. I appreciate that he keeps me up to date on everything!
—Lauren Lindsay, Personal Financial Advisors, LLC


Michael Kitces needs no introduction for anyone interested in practice management and deep dives into financial planning topics.
—Carla LaFleur, PR coordinator for Halpern Financial, Inc.

“EFCPlus,” by Fred Amrein

This is our blog. It’s a resource for college funding, student loans, loan repayment, and student financial literacy. We publish once a week, and the best way to get it is via a monthly newsletter which is a summary of all the blog posts. efcplus.com for the blog, or register for the newsletter at efcplus.com/sign-up-for-newsletter.
—Fred Amrein, Amrein Financial

“CalculatedRisk,” by Bill McBride (calculatedriskblog.com)

I look at this economics and finance blog at least monthly to get a report of the economic facts and news. A credible old-timer at the broker-dealer pointed me to it years ago, and I still go there to immerse myself in economic data. I don’t refer it to clients.
—Valerie Peck, Peck Financial Advisors

The New York Times

I read the New York Times daily. I will sometimes pull out a concisely written article and point people to it on my blog (which is not a traditional blog at all, but more a collection of articles that we link to for our monthly newsletter).
—Valerie Peck, Peck Financial Advisors


These two newsletter services offer a daily collection of five interesting articles that help us think more broadly. I scan both of them and read them more deeply some evenings. The articles are broader than finance or economics and contain a range of thought-provoking ideas, philosophies, perspectives, and projects. I don’t refer clients to either of these.
—Valerie Peck, Peck Financial Advisors

sophiabera.wpengine.com, by Sophia Bera, and financiallytwisewomen.com/blog, by Brittney Castro

Though their blogs are mostly aimed at prospective clients and new investors looking for educational content, I really like seeing what the next generation of advisors is doing for marketing. I think that videos, ebooks, and online courses that provide real value are a great way to show anyone who googles your name that you have expertise in a particular area.
—Carla LaFleur, PR coordinator for Halpern Financial, Inc.

Jennifer Lazarus is a NAPFA member who runs a financial practice in Durham, NC. Please email your column ideas to Jennifer at jennifer@lazarusfp.com.