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In theory investing is so easy. You just pick a couple of low-cost index funds, maybe adjust the stock-bond balance according to your age, and, voila, you're done.

OK, you probably should allow for taxes. Deductions now and taxes later. Or maybe the other way around, convert a little to your Roth IRA now and hopefully enjoy tax exempt growth later.

Unfortunately, tax rules change constantly so just because a plan made sense three, five, or ten years ago doesn't necessarily mean it makes sense today. Fair enough, you just make sure you keep up with rule changes and act accordingly.

Of course, it helps a whole lot to have an idea how much you're going to take out of your accounts, and when you plan on doing so, before you pick your investments. No problem. You map out major mileposts ahead and invest thereafter.

Naturally, you allow for inflation before projecting those withdrawals. Historically, inflation has been around 3% per year but an aging population might cause a slightly slower growth rate so maybe 2% will suffice.

And you'll keep up with the news. It tells you right on the front page what really matters and what you might be able to ignore. Experts talk about recessions and inverted yield curves these days. It seems like they sometimes suggest you should change your investments when the outlook sours. Easy enough, you'll put pen to paper and figure out the extent to which you should change course.

Then, when the same experts tell you the danger is over you can readjust. This is so easy.

Somewhere you see the point made that you should have a cash buffer so you set aside a chunk for that. Maybe six months' worth of spending. Or less if you have relatively safe income sources like social security and pension.

Granted, you don't know for how many years you'll need money. Or the extent to which health care might hit your wallet later in life. Some insurance or extra money can take care of that. There's no need to make this more complicated than a five-minute straight shooting article. More than that is probably just self-serving Wall Street fluff anyways.

You expect there could be some nasty drops in the markets along the way. But you also know not to react even if the experts suddenly talk a lot about the need to avoid volatility.

Granted, if these downturns show that some of your investments no longer work, well, you're an adult, you'll sell and move on. No need to get proud and refuse to admit mistakes. That buy-and-hold stuff can only guide you so far, after all.

Sarcasm aside, if you have the time, temperament, and inclination to continuously keep up with all of this then investing actually may not be too much to keep up with. If not, maybe you should consider asking a professional for help.

Good luck.

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