

Stock Doc: Healthy Mind, Healthy Profits

Make sure that your definition of success doesn't set you up for endless frustration.

BY ALDEN CASS

Feb 5, 2007 2:01 PM EST

[READ AS SINGLE PAGE](#)

Editor's note: Alden Cass, a psychologist, writes two columns for TheStreet.com: one that delves into how behavior and emotions affect investing, the other a health column specifically for men.

Many men working within the financial services industry have a preconceived notion that psychologists are too "touchy feely" or too serious to understand their daily plight. Often, I find that they can be correct in making that generalization.

Conversely, I'm not the typical psychologist that your parents forced you to see when they got divorced or when you acted out in high school. I'm action-oriented, practical and not afraid to tell strong-willed executives that they are wrong, when necessary.

My practice is composed of armchair investors, alpha male traders, advisers, investment bankers and athletes. All of these people adhere to a similar goal in life: meeting their bottom line. They are fiercely competitive, self-critical, compulsive, indulgent and entitled. These polished individuals with perfectionist attitudes are desperately searching for happiness.

They may often define happiness as a byproduct of their overall financial

success, status of their jobs and how comfortable their family lives may be. My job is to help them eliminate painful emotions or frustrations before they negatively affect their quality of life.

Over the next year, I plan to help you gain some insight into what makes you tick and give you some tips for gaining emotional control over your job and relationships. By describing case studies that you might identify with, I will demonstrate new skills for managing your emotions and significant relationships as well as complex work environments that include severe market mood swings.

Recommended for you:

Tesla Shares Hit One-Year Low as Safety, Liquidity Concerns Mount on Carmaker

Who Cares That Facebook Will Make It Easier to Know Your Privacy Settings

Tech Gets Wrecked, Oracle, Google, Tesla and Nike - 5 Things You Must Know Before the Market Opens

Cass is a performance enhancement coach and clinical psychologist for Catalyst Strategies Group (www.catsg.com) who specializes in working directly with individual and teams of senior investment executives, including high-profile CEOs, top hedge fund and prop traders, investors, and financial advisors to help them achieve their financial and personal goals. He works to modify behaviors that are hampering their performance and to give them the mental edge within competitive work environments. He is a licensed clinical psychologist and an expert on the use of psychology in the financial services industry. He has conducted behavioral healthcare studies on retail stockbrokers that indicated that 23 percent of the group measured met criteria for major depression. His research has been presented at both national and international conferences (APA, ICPP). He is a major contributor to columns in On Wall Street Magazine and Traderdaily.com. Cass has also conducted workshops with the Securities Industry Association, Money Management Institute, Trader Monthly Magazine's Peak Performance Workshop, The Wall Street Branch Managers Meeting at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and the London Bullion Market Association, the Silver & Zinc Association, the Investment Management Consultants Association (IMCA), and the Investment Products Association (IPA).

He has appeared in the following media: The Today Show, Fox News Live, New York Magazine, Businessweek, Lou Dobbs Moneyline CNN, CNN money.com, CNBC London, Financial Times, London Financial Weekly, Washington Post Radio, NY Newsday, On Wall Street Magazine, E-Trade "On Air," BBC Radio, Reuter's Business Newswire, New York Times, Boston Globe, Absolute Return Magazine.

We'll explore topics such as depression, anxiety, burnout, substance abuse, divorce, dating, office politics, adultery and coping with physical injury. I urge you to email me with questions or stories about struggles that you might be experiencing at work or at home. I'll be ready to supply you with practical solutions in upcoming columns.

Before You Invest

Wall Street executives or any people working in high-pressure, fast-paced jobs often have trouble when their financial success, job status or family life becomes uncertain or unfulfilling. These individuals typically view the world in absolutes, where things are either black or white. They might even stay away from gray areas of ambiguity the way Superman avoids kryptonite. They either win or they lose. To them, second place is simply not an option.

But the markets can be volatile and filled with uncertainty, and we all know that investors, traders, advisers and bankers are forced to face this reality every day. Events in the Middle East, statements from the **Federal Reserve**, natural disasters and scandals are all out of our control.

Predictive accuracy has certainly become a commodity for us when it comes to investing. Consequently, unforeseen events at home with your significant other can add fuel to the fire and set off a serious chain of negative outcomes that may spill over into your work life. The key here is to be prepared for anything.

Case in point: There are a variety of negative outcomes that can surface when your expectations for absolute success on a given trade, investment or relationship are not met with reality. I had a client named "David" who crumbled emotionally every time one of his "sure thing" trades went awry. He was a perfectionist and a bit grandiose when it came to being certain about which direction a trade would go.

When it didn't pan out for him, he grew horribly depressed and angry. He became hypersensitive and would scream at his wife when she asked him politely to help her with a small task. There is nothing wrong with David having confidence in his trading ability, but his level of confidence created a blind spot and set him up for certain disappointment and household strife.

David needed to lower his expectations and make them more realistic when it came to the possibility of a "nonsuccess" -- this can be a more palatable term than the word "failure." He learned that to be successful and happy more consistently, he needed to tinker with his definition of success. He also needed to change his belief that he was an omniscient trader.

I always tell clients like David that even the best hitters in baseball will fail seven out of 10 tries at bat. It's perfectly fine to have a bad trade and still consider yourself to be a great investor, even if you're not the Ted Williams of your chosen profession. My advice? Brush yourself off, get back out there and keep on swinging for line drives --but not always home runs.

IF YOU LIKED THIS ARTICLE YOU MIGHT LIKE

Stock Doc: Two-Faced Dollar Doldrums

The "Stock Doc" looks at the strong dollar policy.

Alden Cass | Nov 19, 2009 4:00 PM EST

Your Inner Super-Trader

Attention Traders: Interested in improving your trading acumen? Read this.

Alden Cass | May 28, 2008 7:19 PM EDT

Open Book: Think Like a Bull, Avoid Disaster

Stressed by the market? A new book looks at how 'bullish thinking' can save the day.

Alden Cass | Mar 29, 2008 11:55 AM EDT

What Traders Can Learn From the New England Patriots

To maintain perfection requires some serious introspection. Here's how it's done.

Alden Cass | Jan 14, 2008 3:33 PM EST

Stock Doc: Adultery on Wall Street

Dr. Cass offers advice for a reader who strayed from his marriage.

Alden Cass | Nov 10, 2007 11:16 AM EST

