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As you know we're not *Gordon Gekko* types (as depicted by Michael Douglas) but we are a lot like *Gordon Murray*. In fact, Terry had the same epiphany some 10 years ago.

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A Dying Banker's Last Instructions

By [RON LIEBER](#)

There are no one-handed push-ups or headstands on the [yoga](#) mat for Gordon Murray anymore.

No more playing bridge, either — he jokingly accuses his brain surgeon of robbing him of the gray matter that contained all the bidding strategy.

But when Mr. Murray, a former bond salesman for [Goldman Sachs](#) who rose to the managing director level at both [Lehman Brothers](#) and Credit Suisse First Boston, decided to cease all treatment five months ago for his glioblastoma, a type of brain cancer, his first impulse was not to mourn what he couldn't do anymore or to buy an island or to move to Paris. Instead, he hunkered down in his tiny home office here and channeled whatever remaining energy he could muster into a slim paperback. It's called "[The Investment Answer](#)," and he wrote it with his friend and [financial adviser](#) Daniel Goldie to explain investing in a handful of simple steps.

Why a book? And why this subject? Nine years ago, after retiring from 25 years of pushing [bonds](#) on pension and [mutual fund](#) managers trying to beat the market averages over long periods of time, Mr. Murray had an epiphany about the futility of his former customers' pursuits.

He eventually went to work as a consultant for Dimensional Fund Advisors, a mutual fund company that [rails against active money management](#). So when his death sentence arrived, Mr. Murray knew he had to work quickly and resolved to get the word out to as many everyday investors as he could.

"This is one of the true benefits of having a brain tumor," Mr. Murray said, laughing. "Everyone wants to hear what you have to say."

He and Mr. Goldie have managed to beat the clock, finishing and printing the book themselves while Mr. Murray is still alive. It is plenty useful for anyone who isn't already investing in a collection of index or similar funds and dutifully rebalancing every so often.

But the mere fact that Mr. Murray felt compelled to write it is itself a remarkable story of an almost willful ignorance of the futility of active money management — and how he finally stumbled upon a better way of investing. Mr. Murray now stands as one the highest-ranking Wall Street veterans to take back much of what he and his colleagues worked for during their careers.

“Our word was our bond, and good ethics was good business,” he said of his Wall Street career. “That got replaced by liar loans and ‘I hope I’m gone by the time this thing blows up.’ ”

Mr. Murray retired in 2001. At the time, his personal portfolio was the standard Wall Street big-shot barbell, with a pile of [municipal bonds](#) at one end to provide safe tax-free income and [private equity](#) and hedge fund [investments](#) at the other.

When some of those bonds came due, [he sought out Mr. Goldie](#), a former professional tennis player and 1989 Wimbledon quarterfinalist, for advice on what to buy next. Right away, Mr. Goldie began teaching him about Dimensional's funds.

The fact that Mr. Murray knew little up until that point about basic [asset allocation](#) among stocks and bonds and other investments or the failings of active portfolio management is shocking, until you consider the self-regard that his master-of-the-universe colleagues taught him. “It's American to think that if you're smart or work hard, then you can beat the markets,” he said.

But it didn't take long for Mr. Murray to become a true believer in this different way of investing. “I learned more through Dan and Dimensional in a year than I did in 25 years on Wall Street,” he said.

Soon Dimensional hired him as a consultant, helping financial advisers who use its funds explain the company's anti-Wall Street investment philosophy to its clients. “The most inspirational people who talk about alcoholism are people who have gone through A.A.,” said [David Booth](#), Dimensional's founder and chairman. “It's the people who have had the experience and now see the light who are our biggest advocates.”

Playing that role was enough for Mr. Murray until he received his diagnosis in 2008 and decided to stop all aggressive medical treatment. For several years, he had thought about somehow codifying his newfound investment principles, and Mr. Goldie had a hunch that writing the book would be a life-affirming task for Mr. Murray.

The book asks readers to make just five decisions.

First, will you go it alone? The two authors suggest hiring an adviser who earns fees only from you and not from mutual funds or [insurance](#) companies, which is how Mr. Goldie now runs his business.

Second, divide your money among stocks and bonds, big and small, and value and growth. The pair notes that a less volatile portfolio may earn more over time than one with higher volatility and identical average returns. “If you don’t have big drops, the portfolio can compound at a greater rate,” Mr. Goldie said.

Then, further subdivide between foreign and domestic. Keep in mind that putting anything less than about half of your stock money in foreign securities is a bet in and of itself, given that American stocks’ share of the overall global equities market keeps falling.

Fourth, decide whether you will be investing in active or passively managed mutual funds. No one can predict the future with any regularity, the pair note, so why would you think that active managers can beat their respective indexes over time?

Finally, rebalance, by selling your winners and buying more of the losers. Most people can’t bring themselves to do this, even though it improves returns over the long run.

This is not new, nor is it rocket science. But Mr. Murray spent 25 years on Wall Street without having any idea how to invest like a grown-up. So it’s no surprise that most of America still doesn’t either.

Mr. Murray is home for good now, wearing fuzzy slippers to combat nerve damage in his feet and receiving the regular ministrations of hospice nurses.