



The author of *The Virtue of Wealth*, PAUL SUTHERLAND is chief investment officer of the FIM Group and founder of the Utopia Foundation.

## The Practice of Making Good Decisions

You have spent your career successfully managing stock portfolios worth hundreds of millions of dollars during periods of extreme market highs and terrible crashes. During this multi-screen, roller-coaster ride, the stakes for you, your company, and your community have been huge. Can you describe the practices that keep you healthy, centered, and productive?

**Paul Sutherland:** I just got back from a six-block walk to pick up a quinoa and avocado salad for lunch, and I found your question sitting in my inbox. My job does not seem stressful to me. I just make

lots of (hopefully) good decisions. Before lunch, I entered an order to buy well over a million dollars' worth of shares in a company with operations in Namibia, Philippines, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Mali. Before that, I sent orders to sell two million-dollar blocks of shares in companies based in Belgium and Luxembourg. All the while, my team and I were placing smaller trades for individual client accounts, chatting with clients, and monitoring, researching, scanning, and observing the world to help us do our job.

Our job is to make good decisions. So how do we do that without terrible stress? As I write this, Russia is massing tanks, ISIS is killing those who don't share its beliefs, the Israelis are playing tit for tat with the Palestinians, the United States, Europe, and Japan are monetizing (printing money) like crazy, our government is in deadlock, and most of the world—from Cape Town, South Africa, to St. Petersburg, Russia—seems slightly or completely ungovernable.

Today, however, is not unique. I could have written a similar list of the world's crises at almost any time during my thirty-plus-year career. We humans solve problems, create new ones, and the cycle continues. The real question—and the real answer—is always the same.

I could choose to let fear win and thus engage in withdrawal, fight, hatred, and anger. Or I could choose love. To quote pastor Rob Bell, "Love wins!" And so I strive to engage myself in virtue-infused, rational, right practice. Jesus said, "You will always have the poor among you." Buddha said, "Suffering exists so we have something to do." We *always* have something to do. Becoming pessimistic or negative

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about it does not get it done.

My clients have entrusted me to keep their nest egg safe, growing, and resilient to the ups and downs of the world's economic and social turmoil. I do not do anyone any good if I am accepting as reality, reacting to, engaging in, seeking to profit from, or being guided by evil, hate, corruption, war, violence, or injustice.

So as an investor, I attempt to avoid war products, tobacco, alcohol, pornography, violent video game manufacturers, misaligned energy companies, and other companies that I believe are not placing our people and our planet at least on the same level with profits.

It is also important to stay centered and calm and let positive intentions be my guide. To do this, I must take care of myself. I eat a healthy plant-based diet, get regular exercise, and plenty of rest. My walk to get my salad for lunch is a simple example.

I have had a meditation practice since I was 18 years old. I also believe that to stay healthy, and not to be in conflict, we need to be an example of "right practice." We need to integrate how we wish to be with how we act

and how we experience life. So I do not smoke, drink, own a gun, or eat animals that were killed either "nicely" or violently.

Am I perfect? No. Am I recycling enough? No. Do I use plastic? Sometimes. But my clear intention is to do less harm and to do more good. I carry postcards around to remind me of what I wish to expect of myself.

Recently, I watched a documentary on the Dalai Lama about the importance of discipline in spiritual practice: discipline to stay centered; discipline to avoid evil thoughts, people, and actions; discipline to avoid letting bad emotions cause us to do harm; and discipline to create a better world.

I've also realized along the way that happiness takes discipline, and it takes discipline to live and acknowledge our (spiritual) responsibility to our planet and to our people. None of this is easy. But for me, to do anything else is not being in reality—and to not be in reality would be stressful. **S&H**

To ask Paul a question, email him directly at [paul@spiritualityhealth.com](mailto:paul@spiritualityhealth.com).

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