



Financial Advisor By Day, Ballerina By Night

April 20, 2016



Karen Perri is not your typical wealth advisor at a Fortune 500 company. Yes, as of February 2016 she has \$200 million under management for her clients at the Northfield, NJ, offices of Morgan Stanley, at which she has worked for 23 years with her husband and business partner, Steve. Yes, she deals all day with facts and

figures, processing reams of financial, economic and investment information, formulating strategies to help meet her clients' complex portfolio challenges. And then, after a long day at work, Perri slips off her heels...and laces up her ballet flats.

Karen Perri is not your typical ballet dancer, either.

"I started ballet at the age of 33. I am now 55," says Perri, a gymnast by training. She was a Florida state gymnastics champion; the Miami Herald 1978 Athlete of the Year for gymnastics; won a gold medal with the 1977 Maccabiah games team (the Olympics for Jewish athletes held in Israel); and received a full athletic scholarship to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, also for gymnastics.

"After many years of not being active, I resolved to find a way to exercise in my early thirties. I tried the usual "gym" route and hated it. So, when a new ballet and dance studio opened in my area, I was intrigued. Since I had dabbled in ballet during my gymnastics training, and since I love classical music, I thought I would give it a try. Luckily the studio had classes for adults as well as children and, needless to say, I was hooked at once," Perri says.

Now, Perri dances four days per week, for 90 minutes per class. In addition, she does Pilates two days a week for one hour per class. "I dance at two ballet studios in my area. At one of them – Dolente's Dance and Fitness in Egg Harbor Township, NJ – I dance with other adults ranging in age from 23 to 70! Several of us have been dancing together for close to 20 years, and each year we perform together in a recital. Many are professional women, including a doctor and a realtor." At the other studio, Perri says, she dances in an advanced class with a competitive dance team, all teenagers ranging from ages 14 to 18.

For Perri – whose day job involves coping with recent market fluctuations – dance provides an outlet for stress. "Some days clients will call, concerned about global economic woes or market plunges of 300 or 400 points, and I will have to calm them down and reassure them that we have structured their portfolios to withstand such fluctuations. Then I go to dance class and forget everything that happened all day long," she

says. “A ballet class always starts at the Barre with a series of exercises. After 10 minutes, I am fully immersed.”

“Taking a ballet class is not like walking on a treadmill where you can watch TV or your mind can wander. You must be paying attention at all times. The teacher demonstrates a combination, and you have about one minute to remember it and then perform it. You cannot be worrying about anything else,” Perri adds.

Perri often travels to Philadelphia to see the Pennsylvania ballet. In the area she lives, Galloway Township, local movie theatres often show live simulcasts of ballets from New York City, which she views with fellow dancer friends.

Her favorite dancers, Perri says, are Misty Copeland and Diana Vishneva, both with the American Ballet Theatre. “I love Misty because she is not the typical ballerina body, and neither am I. She is more muscular, but still elegant; she also is bringing attention to the world of ballet because of her diversity. Diana is a beautiful, expressive dancer. She is not the most perfect technically, but when she dances she does so with her entire soul. You can truly tell she loves what she is doing.”

“Ballet inspires me. For years, I danced with a woman named Connie. When I started dancing with her she was about 70 years old and I danced with her until she was 85 or so. She still is alive today but no longer dancing. She performed all the recitals with us. Even though sometimes she could not remember the steps or choreography, or moved slower than the rest of us, she gave it her all. And at the end of the recital she always got the loudest applause and the most flowers – she would get so many bouquets we had to help her carry them off stage!” Perri recalls.

“For me, ballet is about finding a creative outlet about which I’m passionate to balance out my career, which I’m also passionate about,” Perri says. “Fortunately, my husband and I both found balance. He loves golf as much as I do ballet. Actually, I like golf as well, but I’m not nearly as good as he is!”

Karen Perri is a Financial Advisor with the Global Wealth Management Division of Morgan Stanley in Northfield, NJ. She is a resident of Galloway Township and can be reached at 609-383-2288 or at karen.perri@morganstanley.com

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