



# GRIT WITH GRACE

## 2023 In Review: From Pain, Came Gain

By Randy Kaufman

with research assistance from Dustin Lowman

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*"Love the hand that fate deals you and play it as your own, for what could be more fitting?"*

- Marcus Aurelius

I lay in a rescue toboggan — the emergency-red sled ski patrols use to transport injured skiers to safety — whizzing down a run ironically called Twister, pelted on all sides by cold, biting February snow, peering into a chasm of questions.

How severe was that *pop* I felt in my knee? How long would the pain, amplified by every jostle of the toboggan, last? How was my week, my month, my year going to look — to feel?

As I wrote in my recent blog, "[Pop Goes The Knee](#)," these questions — and their answers — had a defining effect on my 2023. It was a year of pain, of unmet expectations, of unrealized plans, of adjusting

to unanticipated circumstances. Viewed through one lens, it was the kind of year that no one hopes to have.

But in being the kind of year no one hopes to have, it was immensely valuable.

As I reflected at numerous points throughout the year — the pop itself, lying on that frigid toboggan, being on a hospital gurney, entering a noisy MRI machine, being told that 2 months of PT had been useless — I reminded myself that most humans believe they can control their lives; yet, that is a fool's game. It is an impossible task, always has been, and always will be. The routine procession of our days, weeks, months, and years feeds us that illusion, only to be shattered in an instant such as mine atop Mt. Crested Butte.



The message — that you can't control what happens to you; all you can control in your life is how you respond — is a core tenet of stoicism. Stoicism's practical applications are practically limitless. ([Read my full blog on stoicism here.](#))

My husband and I joke that we are the King and Queen of Pivot, and we responded accordingly: no sailing last summer, and certainly no hiking. Our shiny tandem bike sat lonely in the garage.

Instead, we slowed down and dug in. We stayed close to home, and therefore got closer to each other and our community than ever before. Highlights included a David Bowie-soundtracked modern dance performance at Jacob's Pillow, James Taylor at Tanglewood, "Cabaret" at the Barrington Stage Company, and — best for last — Alan Cumming at the Mahawie Performing Arts Center. The delights of home were richer and deeper than we ever realized.

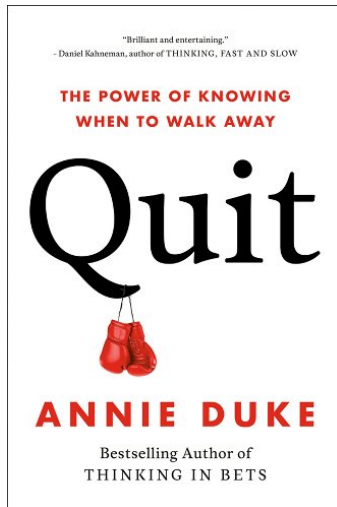
The fall found us on the move again: sailing in Greece and wine-tasting in Argentina with our best friends. Today, as I write, I'm grateful for the year that was, I'm stronger than ever physically and mentally, and I'm planning our next ski trip where I'll get back on the proverbial horse.

With all this in mind, I review below a selection of the thinking, writing, and reading I did in 2023, a year of pain, frustration and more than a few tears, but a year of learning, growing, reading, healing and traveling. In the end, a most fantastic year indeed.

## Key Reflections From 2023

### False Gods: To Quit, With Grace

Written and published before my spill, "[To Quit, With Grace](#)" nonetheless carries a message of stoicism-informed adaptation. People and institutions of all kinds so deeply vilify quitting — detaching ourselves



from a job, project, goal, or relationship — that many of us end up staying in toxic situations much longer than we should.

I should know: I've stayed with at least one of each item on that list for longer than I should have. Reflecting on these experiences, I realize that the fear of quitting stems in part from our obsession with control: The devil we know beats the devil we don't, and even though we're suffering, we at least know what to expect.

But resisting the urge to quit — or not recognizing the warning signs — means we delay growth in the name of control. In this blog, read about my positive experiences with quitting and how to recognize signs that it's time to say goodbye. [Read the blog →](#)

### **Under Pressure: Why We Get Burned Out (And How To Manage It)**

Conversations with my marketing manager — who, as a marketer and independent musician, has a very full plate — led to reflections on my most intense period of burnout: 2011, two years after my 50th birthday, upon returning to New York City after years of isolation in Boston.

Avoiding burnout requires the same thing as destigmatizing quitting does: a revised mindset. Replacing the feeling that you have to do everything — take every opportunity, meet every person, attend every event, occupy every moment with productivity — with the reality that without your health and sanity, nothing else matters. [Read the blog →](#)

### **The Money (And Style) Message Pit: Do Money And Style Messages Rob Us Of Agency?**

Andrea Greenspan and I first linked up in mutual refuge. At an Orlando bar filled with (mostly male) lawyers and accountants, we began a conversation that has lasted decades, centering on an obsession with *what lies beneath* — the subconscious messages that influence our decision-making.

“Quitting is evil” and “Productivity is everything” are two of those messages. Other equally insidious messages like these run rampant through style and in money — Andrea's and my respective fields of expertise. In this co-authored blog, we break down some of the most common messages in each of our fields, where they come from, and how to replace inherited messages with values-based principles for decision-making. [Read the blog →](#)

### **Back To The Fiction: Summer Reading, 2023**

It's been a long time since fiction formed the core of my reading life. It used to, when I was growing up, and learning to love the written word; I loved the other worlds and sensual language that seemed to be the primary domain of novels. But as adult life replaced dreams with realities, and thoughts of the future

with realities of the present, nonfiction took over, providing a seemingly more concrete roadmap to living in the contemporary world.

For whatever reason — maybe my fall knocked something else loose — I found myself returning again and again to fiction this year. And I found myself learning as much about our contemporary world, viewed through the lens of authors near and far, geographically and psychologically. [Check out some of my favorite novels from 2023 →](#)

## Unstoppable Growth

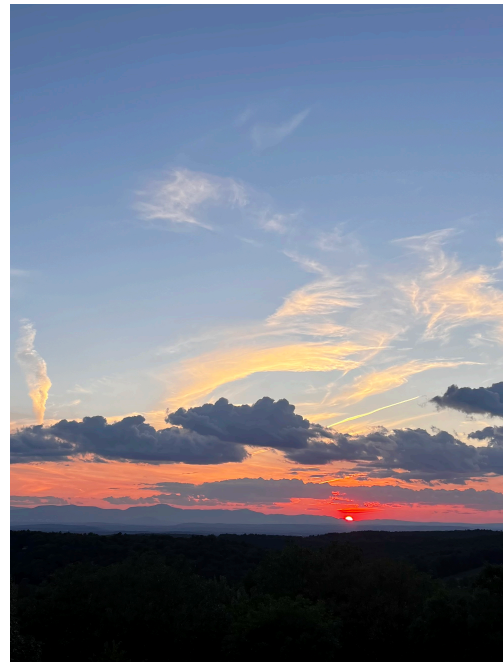
It may sound like a cliché, but looking back over what I’ve thought and experienced in 2023, I’m reminded that growth never *has to* end — no matter your age, your experience, your net worth, or anything else, life always hurls new challenges at you, providing opportunities to grow.

One of my favorite quotes comes from Socrates: “The unexamined life is not worth living.” It’s continuing to examine life — what’s on the surface, and what lies beneath — that makes growth possible. I’m grateful for this blog, and for everyone who reads and responds to it, for deepening my growth, for making me a better wealth advisor, and for enriching my relationship with life.

So long, 2023. May 2024 be as ripe with growth opportunities as you were. (Though, it would be nice to keep both knees intact this year.)

With grit, grace, growth, and much gratitude.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Randy Kaufman, formerly a corporate tax attorney and investment banker, is now a wealth advisor who prides herself on focusing on what matters most: clients' peace of mind, family dynamics, and getting *enough*, not *more*. Randy is a passionate student of impact investing, strategic philanthropy, and behavioral psychology (while not a psychologist, she occasionally plays one in the boardroom). She is dedicated to helping the underprivileged, and is a proud member of global venture fund Acumen's advisory board. A thinker, learner, and pursuer of overarching truths, she is always eager to discuss big ideas about money, and its off-and-on associate, happiness.