

Preparing Yourself Emotionally for Retirement

The reason I decided to take this class today is...

The retirement transition (what questions do you have?)

STAGES OF RETIREMENT

Stage one: Imagination (6-15 years before retirement)

- Begin to imagine retirement
- Start saving for retirement
- May feel anxious about level of preparedness

I have the following feelings about retirement...

My tentative retirement date:

My goals after retirement include...

I can determine what resources I need to meet my retirement goals by...

Stage two: Hesitation* (3-5 years before retirement)

- Question preparedness
- Economic stress intensifies
- Accept retirement is coming soon

Resource: CDC Prevention Checklist: <https://www.cdc.gov/prevention/>

I will improve my physical or emotional health by doing...

One thing I can do to alleviate my anxiety about retirement is...

Stage three: Anticipation (2 years before retirement, up to retirement day)

- Excited about impending retirement
- Feeling “on track”

One thing I can do to help navigate the Anticipation stage is...

Additional questions for consideration:

What is truly important to me; my values? What do I care about deeply?

What will I do when I am no longer committed to the structure of full-time work?

What do I want my life to look like five years after retirement?

What kind of environment is best suited to my/our unique needs and aspirations?

What do I call myself when I no longer have a job title or organizational affiliation?

What might I want to do more of and less of?

What is my purpose in life?

Who will be the key players in my future?

How will I know if I'm being successful when I am no longer being evaluated by my performance at work?

After Retirement

Stage four: Realization* (Retirement Day through the year following)

- Reality sets in
- Many anticipate fulfilling retirement dreams
- May begin to feel disenchanting

Actions you can take:

This might be a good time to find a new purpose and identity. For instance, volunteer work, taking classes or pursuing hobbies.

Consider how you can give back to the community.

Researchers found that people involved in low to moderate levels of volunteer work reported higher levels of life satisfaction, fewer depressive symptoms, and greater increases in well-being versus those who weren't.

One word of caution—volunteering isn't for everyone. It was also found that people who felt duty-bound to volunteer did not reap those same benefits. In other words, if you feel volunteering is a burdensome obligation, don't do it. Find something else to fill your time.

- Expand your social circle. This won't be such a daunting task if you find new ways to fill your time. In other words, if you are volunteering or taking a class is a great way to meet new people.
- Spend time with friends and loved ones and keep in touch with old colleagues. When people work, they have a reason to leave the house and to be social with others and may start to feel isolated without those obligations to leave the house. You may start to lose touch with old colleagues or may experience that family may be busy with other priorities. These relationships can provide valuable support as you navigate your new season in life.

Stage five: Reorientation* (2-15 years after retirement)

Most people adjust in the first year

Routines in place and goals adjusted

May be working with a financial Advisor

Actions you can take:

- Give yourself something to look forward to like planning a trip or having a fun time with family and friends.
- Create new goals for yourself or make a list of things that you always wanted to do and then do those things. You can revisit this list if you find yourself in a slump.
- Exercise can burn away stress and improve coping. Always check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program.
- Reach out to your support system and keep adding to it. It's never too late to make new friends!

Stage six: Reconciliation* (16 or more years after retirement)

Encounter illness and the loss of friends and family

Mixed emotions

Actions you can take:

- Understand what emotions you may face and how to manage them. One reason people get hung up in negative emotional states, such as anxiety and boredom, in any stage of life, is getting stuck in negative thinking patterns. The most helpful thing you can do is to identify any negative or irrational thoughts and change them to more positive thoughts.

You can keep a journal to record your thoughts and to troubleshoot solutions. Try to reframe the negative thought into a positive one. An example would be if I had a negative thought “My daughter did not answer my call. I guess she does not want to talk to me.” Instead, replace this with a positive thought-“My daughter must be busy with the kids or with work; she did mention that she is stressed out because of more responsibility at work. I will talk to her to see if I can watch the grandchildren so she can have time to herself to get caught up with work.”

- Depression can be a common problem among retirees, and they may feel like they lose their sense of purpose. If your emotional state is negatively affecting how you think, eat, feel, sleep, take care of yourself, or otherwise cope it is time to seek professional help. A good place to start is your primary care doctor.

*The *New Retirement Mindscape II*[®] and *New Retirement Mindscape*[®] studies were commissioned by Ameriprise Financial, Inc. and conducted by telephone by Harris Interactive in May 2010 and August 2005 among 2,007 (2,010) and 2,000 (2005) U.S. adults age 40-75. The 2005 study was conducted in conjunction with Age Wave and Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D.

Marriage and Committed Relationships

For many couples, retirement is a long-awaited and exciting event that will result in more time for travel, hobbies, and family visits. Sometimes, however, a couple does not expect that retirement may change their relationship, as well as their marriage. A lot of information is available to help people plan financially for retirement, yet very little attention is paid to how relationships and personal well-being may be changed as a result of it. Despite a common belief that retirement is "easy," research shows that it can sometimes be challenging and frustrating. For example, leaving the workforce can have long-lasting effects on how we feel about ourselves and how we relate to others, especially our spouse.

For the most part, retiring couples adjust to this new life stage with few problems or difficulties. Patterns of communication and interaction in the marriage prior to retirement are important. For example, couples who get along and are able to talk openly with each other before retirement are likely to have an easier adjustment experience and report high marital satisfaction in retirement. On the other hand, couples who have always had marital problems or feel dissatisfied with their marriage before retirement, are likely to continue having these feelings after they retire. In fact, spending so much time together in retirement may cause unhappy couples to finally change aspects of their marriage with which they have not been comfortable. Even couples who have a relatively happy marriage can experience "bumps" on the road to retirement bliss. In fact, research has shown a number of different factors that can affect marital quality for retired couples. Here are a few examples:

- **Timing of Retirement:** The decision about when to retire and who retires first can have important consequences for married couples. Research shows that one spouse retiring too early can lead to feelings of resentment and regret, especially if he or she feels pressure to retire. Marital quality suffers the most when wives continue working after a husband retires. Often wives continue their homemaking responsibilities, in addition to work, which causes conflict. When the wife retires before the husband, husbands usually aren't affected. Wives, however, are not as satisfied with this arrangement. Finally, couples who retire at the same time appear to adjust to retirement the most smoothly. However, these couples do have to get used to spending so much time together.
- **Retirement Goals:** Couples who have different plans for retirement often experience more disagreements than those who share the same retirement goals. For example, if one spouse wants to spend his or her retirement crossing the country in an RV but the other spouse prefers to garden at home, negotiation or compromise will be necessary.

- **Household Chores:** Research shows that deciding who does what household tasks in retirement can be very important to a couple's happiness. Overall, retired husbands do not do an equal share of the housework no matter if their wife is still working or if she's retired. For many women, especially those who have worked outside the home, retirement means household chores can now be shared with a retired husband. When husbands fail to do their share of the housework, wives often feel resentment and disappointment. Other retired women resent their retired husbands invading their "territory." These women report feeling "smothered" when their husbands are at home all the time. The "underfoot syndrome" occurs when a husband interferes in his wife's household routine. All of these situations can lead to marital conflict in retirement.

Suggestions for Preparing Your Marriage for Retirement

- **Communicate Openly.** Communication is essential to the preparation of a marriage for retirement. It is important that couples discuss their expectations for retirement both from a personal perspective (personal goals, interests, dreams) but also from a couple perspective (joint activities, mutual goals, issues of sexual and emotional intimacy). By talking openly about retirement expectations, couples can avoid future conflict. Communication will also enable couples to work together to plan a mutually satisfying and fulfilling retirement experience.
- **Set Boundaries.** Setting boundaries in retirement is necessary to protect personal time and "couple" time and can also provide a sense of structure and control. A critical issue in retirement for many couples is establishing a balance between "separateness" (personal privacy, pursuing individual hobbies, spending time with friends) and "togetherness" (participating in joint activities, maintaining intimacy, and socializing as a couple). In addition, it is critical that couples agree on how much time they want to spend with family and friends, engaged in community activities, and responding to the needs of others (i.e., caregiving tasks). Mutually agreeing on how to balance individuality and togetherness is important to maintaining marital satisfaction in retirement.

- Prepare for the loss of the work role. Preparing for the loss of the work role may be necessary for spouses who were considerably invested in their professional careers. The loss of the work role can lead to feelings of depression, a sense of having no purpose, and a loss of identity in one or both spouses. These emotions frequently impact the marital relationship and can lead to decreased marital quality. Couples who recognize the significance of this loss and the importance of replacing this source of fulfillment with alternative roles and activities are likely to avoid negative emotions associated with this loss.
- Designate household tasks. Deciding on who does what household chores in retirement is more important than many couples realize. Research shows a common source of conflict for retired couples surrounds the division of labor in the home. Couples who have previously practiced a traditional division of household chores (wife doing cleaning, cooking; husband doing household maintenance and yard duties) may either choose to continue this pattern or may decide that a more equitable approach is more appropriate for retirement. Couples need to discuss and mutually agree on how they will manage household responsibilities rather than assume old patterns will continue or that new changes will take place.

Conclusion

Couples who are transitioning from full or part-time employment to retirement frequently do not realize the impact this life transition will have on their marital relationship. Due to increased longevity and early retirement patterns, couples can expect to spend a significant portion of their marriage in retirement. Despite this demographic reality, few couples work to prepare their marriage for this new life stage and are surprised by the changes and challenges they experience in their marriage as a result of retirement. Just as couples financially prepare for the retirement transition, couples need to prepare psychologically to ensure their marital security in retirement.

Questions to consider about how retirement may affect long-term committed relationships:

How will we decide when each of us will retire? Where do we want to live?

If we don't retire at the same time, what are some expectations we have of each other during the time one of us is working, and the other is retired?

How will we spend our time together as a couple? How will our roles and domestic duties change?

What new and different demands do we anticipate we will face from family and friends?

How much time do we anticipate spending weekly with our friends, children, grandchildren, etc.?

Who do we have to support us, as a couple, as we make the adjustment to retirement? What will we do if we have marital issues?