



HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT RETIREMENT



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Introduction – Your Retirement Success

Ah, retirement. That time of life that our culture describes as ‘the golden years’ is a period when we should be able to enjoy all that we have earned. For many of us, retirement has been the goal we’ve been working towards for the majority of our adult lives. We have kept it in sight like a beacon that keeps us going when we’ve felt that we just can’t stand another day of work. We have made sacrifices to make sure we can retire when the time is right. We’ve learned that some things are not as important as knowing that we’ll be able to take care of ourselves and our spouse or loved ones once we retire.

Like some, you may have been saving a portion of your income every paycheck, carefully planning and counting down the days on your calendar until you could leave your job for the last time. You have a very good idea about how you want to spend your retirement years and you know that you will enjoy yourself. Just making it to the day your retirement starts is your goal – you figure everything after that will take care of itself. You don’t worry about being bored with days upon days without work to fill them – in fact, you have so much planned for your retirement that you can’t imagine how you will get it all done!

Or, retirement may have come earlier than you expected due to health issues, family issues, or changes in the economy and your workplace. You may find yourself thrust into a change that you were not necessarily prepared to make. Now you’re wondering what to do with your days that you never thought you’d have free at this age. You may be concerned for yourself and your family and anxious about whether or not you will be able to meet their needs.

No matter what the reason for your retirement, with some thought and creativity, you can truly make these the best years of your life. Allowing yourself to explore what’s possible will help you keep a positive attitude about your retirement years. The chapters in this book will help you to create the kind of outlook and attitude that will help you to think through the choices that you will need to make and to select the best options for you and your family during your retirement years.

There are people who retire and find that they have more to do in a day than they ever could have thought possible. They may find themselves with full schedules and fulfilling lives, wondering, ‘how did I ever find time to

do anything when I had a full-time job?’ They will be planned, organized, and ready to jump with both feet into the world of retirement.

But for many others, retirement will come as a shock. After the initial bliss of freedom wears off, they will find it difficult to live without the structure that a work life imposed upon their daily activities. They may feel restless, anxious, or in the worst cases, depressed.

However, even the retirees who would otherwise thrive in retirement may face some unforeseen obstacles to enjoying their retirement. These could come in several possible forms:

- Financial pressures due to poor planning or changes in circumstances
- Relationship pressures between you and your spouse now that you are both spending so much time together
- Social pressures from family or friends regarding where they expect you to live and what they expect you to do when you retire
- Depression, anger, boredom, or other unexpected emotional reactions to being retired

Did any of those possible obstacles surprise you? If you’re like most of us, you’ve certainly thought about the financial issues around retirement. But perhaps you have never thought about what your family and friends would think about your retirement – you’ve just been thinking about it from your own point of view, as anyone would. Or perhaps you can’t imagine being depressed once you’ve retired. You’ve always believed that you would be relieved and thrilled with all of the extra time.

Granted, you have absolutely every right to concentrate on what will be best for you in your retirement, despite the preferences of others. Although doing so has the potential to cause friction, believe it or not, it is possible to make your retirement choices without having serious problems with your relationships. To do this, we’ll explore some ways to relay your intentions to the people that you care about so that you can avoid experiencing their reactions as an obstacle. And in many cases, depression or other negative emotions in retirement are just a symptom that you are not using the time the way that you had envisioned. You’ve worked hard,

you've made sacrifices to get here, and you deserve to have the best experiences that you can in your retirement.

And that's exactly what this book will help you to do.

We will examine what you need to know about yourself as you come closer to the end of your working career, and we'll look at whether or not you are truly ready for retirement. We'll think about where you might get 'stopped' in making your retirement dreams come true, and what else you might need to do to prepare for retirement.

Then we'll talk about whether or not you are financially ready for retirement. We'll think about what you need in retirement, versus what you want in retirement, and how to come to an arrangement that you can afford financially while still retiring as soon as possible.

For some retirees, the idea of not working is hard to imagine. So we'll look at ways that you can still make a contribution to the workplace or to your community as a retiree. If you want to keep working, there are a number of options to explore. Whether you want to earn a part-time income, a full-time income, or maybe even start your own business, we'll look at those possibilities here. If you want to continue contributing to your community without actually having a job, there are many different ways to make a difference. We'll examine ways you can have a positive impact on others that don't involve having a 'job.'

Next, we will look at what other aspects of your retirement you may want to create. Across several chapters, we'll explore what is important to you not just in retirement, but also in the remainder of your life. Once you know what you want your ideal retirement life to look like, we'll identify any skills, habits, or structures you might want to learn in order to make sure that you have all of the tools you need to create the retirement that you want.

Beyond what you know you want to pursue right away, we will also expand the conversation to talk about what's possible for you now, and what, among all of those possibilities, might bring you the greatest enjoyment. You might finally take those dance lessons you have always wanted to try, or finally take that trip to Italy that you've dreamed about ever since you first saw 'Roman Holiday.'

No matter what, this book will help you not only to dream about what you might do when you retire, but it will help you to identify how to make sure that you can turn that dream into a reality.

I encourage you, as you read through these pages, to keep your mind and your heart open. There will be a number of exercises that are designed to help you identify what you think about retirement, what's important to you, and what you want your future to contain. You may be surprised by what you discover about yourself and the things that are important to you.

I also recommend that you keep a notebook and a pen with you as you read, in case you get some insights that you want to remember. You may find that you continue to chew these ideas over long after you stop reading – and that's excellent. It means that your mind is creating, percolating, and that even if you don't know all the answers now, they are coming.

Chapter One:

Are You Really Ready?

Life begins at retirement.

~Author Unknown

What does it take to be ready for retirement? The first thought in answering that question is likely to be related to money. Yes, of course, having the financial support you'll need to pay for your expenses is a necessity. But there is more to consider than just the balances in your bank accounts.

The other answers to that question are likely to have as much to do with your personal outlook on life, your family situation, the nature of the job you are considering leaving, your age, your health, and what your goals are for your retired life. We'll look at how all of these different aspects of your life will impact your experience of retirement, and how you can manage them in order to create the outcomes for your retirement that you truly want.

Your Personal Feelings about Retirement

To start examining your personal situation and the way that you feel about retirement, let's start with some questions that will address how the choice of whether or not to retire might affect your life. You might want to have your notebook and pen available to jot down some thoughts as you ask yourself the following questions:

- How satisfied am I with my current job? How much longer can I see myself working at this job and still being satisfied?
- How much of my time is currently spent on activities outside of the workplace? Do I find that I am disappointed that I cannot spend more time on these activities?

- Are there important relationships in my life that have suffered because of my having to work? Do I wish I had more time to improve these relationships?
- What are the wishes of my family regarding the timeframe in which I retire? Have I talked to them about it?
- What am I willing to trade in terms of financial comforts in retirement in order to be able to retire earlier rather than later?
- What goals could I see pursuing in retirement that I am not pursuing now?
- Considering these questions, in what areas of my life might I feel regrets if I don't achieve certain goals?

There's another very important question to ask yourself that may sound deceptively simple: How do you feel about retirement? Do you see it as the chance to start the next phase of your life, knowing that there will be more phases to come? Or do you feel more depressed about retirement, as if this is the beginning of the downward slope your life?

Hopefully, you are in the former mindset. But if not, this book may help you to change to a more positive outlook as you begin to explore all of the possibilities you have open to you during retirement. Either way, you will see that you still have the chance to make the most of the years ahead of you, whatever that might look like or whatever it means to you.

It's important that you also examine your own assumptions about your retirement. Only by knowing what your expectations are can you design a plan to achieve them. Or, if your assumptions about retirement lead to a picture of the years ahead of you that you do not want, then you'll know what you need to plan to change in order to be happy once you retire.

Another important area of information you'll need to have is what the expectations of your loved ones are in relation to your retirement. By identifying and addressing these expectations, you can prevent them from becoming obstacles to your goals as we move forward.

Being ready for retirement is so much more than having the savings to continue paying your bills. It involves knowing your desires and what kind of a retirement you would like to create for yourself. Being 'ready' for retirement entails knowing more than what your budget might be. It

involves having an outlook that helps you take the steps you need to take to bring the kind of retirement you want to fruition.

If you picture your retirement years as a blank slate, a book of your days ahead that you can fill and design, what would that design look like? What changes have you always assumed you would make? For example, will you stop working completely? Will you travel? Or will you do something completely new, like becoming a world-class bridge player?

Keep thinking about these questions as we move through the remainder of this and the following chapters, and what retirement means to you should become clearer. If your picture of how you'll spend your retirement is not very focused, that's fine. Many of us might not know exactly what we want that time in our lives to look like. It's always been a period 'out there,' somewhere in the future. We may have been saving for it, we may have even identified the day it will start. But few of us have identified exactly what goals we have for retirement. And fewer still have begun putting into place the framework that will help us to achieve those goals.

The topics in the following chapters are all elements of that framework. The discussions will bring different aspects of your retirement under examination, and will help you to identify different strategies to ensure that you have the kind of retirement experience that you've worked so hard for and that you so richly deserve.

The topics will tend to be related to each other, so don't be surprised if you find that you think of more answers for a previous chapter's questions as you move through the rest of the book. That's why your notebook is going to be so important. Ideas may come at you in unexpected moments, and you'll want to capture them before they get away from you.

You're Ready for Retirement, but Are Your Loved Ones?

One main area to examine when it comes to a successful retirement is whether or not you have considered your loved ones in your plans. If you have a family, whether it be children, siblings, or parents, you'll want to explore how your family situation might impact your retirement and how your retirement might impact them.

In many cases of preparing for retirement, this is an area that often goes overlooked. You might think that everyone is on the same page about

how your lives will change after you retire. But you could find out in a rather unpleasant way that you are mistaken. You might be surprised at how much strife can arise around these differing expectations. And this is strife that can be avoided if important conversations happen ahead of time.

Let's remember that retirement itself is still a rather modern concept. For most of human history, work continued until either death or infirmity. The family unit was responsible for caring for their elders, and in many cases, paid for their expenses. In exchange, the elders may have assisted with child care or other household assistance. The cycle would then repeat itself as the children aged and had children of their own.

Families were not just dependent upon each other, but upon the community as a whole. Many people stayed in the same village, town, or region for their entire life, keeping their network of support nearby. Children didn't necessarily leave their home upon marriage, but often moved their spouse into the family home.

For many of us, this way of family life is just no longer relevant. We live with our own nuclear family, but our parents, siblings, and other relatives may be cities, states, or even continents away. Perhaps we visit once or twice a year, but we have no expectations that they would assist us with child rearing. Our parents do not expect that we will care for them in their old age – they might prefer it, but they don't expect it.

At least, this is what we believe about their expectations at this time. But we need to be certain that we haven't just made assumptions about what our family expects of us in retirement that could be completely false. We need to clarify their point of view so that we may address any disparities before they grow into conflicts that could hurt our relationships with our loved ones.

Clarifying Expectations

Think about your retirement from the point of view of your children, if you have them. Have you ever discussed your retirement with them? What do they know about your plans once you leave your job? If you currently provide any financial support to your children, have you talked to them about whether or not you will be able to continue that support? You will need to consider what aspects of your plans for your retirement, if any, you are willing to change in order to accommodate their wishes. Then you will need

to find a way to communicate those changes (or lack thereof) to your children.

For example, if you live nearby, your children may expect you to become more involved in taking care of their own children once you retire. Especially if they are currently paying for childcare. To them, it may just seem logical that you would be willing to become the main care givers for their kids in order to help them financially and in order to enjoy more time with your grandchildren.

If you don't live nearby, they may want you to move closer - not just for childcare reasons, but so that they are not far away in case you need assistance. They may worry that you might not be able to take care of yourself as you continue to age, and having you close would just bring peace of mind. Or, they may assume that you will be lonely once you retire and that you will want them to be a larger part of your life to keep you company. This may particularly be their concern if you are single.

All of these assumptions on their part may lead to some hurt feelings, disappointment, or arguments if they are not addressed. You may have every intention of becoming more involved with your grandchildren or children. But if you don't see yourself in a full-time childcare role, or in any other roles they may have imagined for you, then you will need to discuss it with your family. Consider using some open-ended questions to help start a conversation about what their assumptions might be. Some examples include:

- Have you ever thought about how things will change once I retire? If so, what are some of the thoughts you've had?
- Do you have any expectations about my availability/involvement in your life once I retire? What are they?
- What would you like to see happen when I retire?
- I am thinking about doing _____ when I retire (or moving to _____ when I retire). How do you feel about that?

A similar situation may arise regarding your own parents, if they are still alive. They may want you to help them more than you have been able to while you were working. They may want you to move closer to them once you don't have work as a reason to stay where you are. Or your siblings may expect that you become the main responsible party for your parents' care

since you are retired. Talking to them about their wishes can help you to avoid straining your relationship.

Again, the best way to avoid having a conversation like this turn into an argument is to let them tell you how they feel, rather than assuming you already know. Some possible questions are listed below, but remember, these are just examples. They might not apply to your situation.

- Mom, Dad, what do you think you will need from me (or want from me) in terms of my time or attention when I retire? Will it be different from now? How so?
- What are your wishes for your personal care as you get older? Have you thought about how you would like us to support you as you need more help?
- What arrangements, if any, have you already made for your future? What financial assistance do you think you'll need to make those arrangements work?
- (To a sibling): I'd like to talk to you about how you see care for our parents happening as they get older. They have shared with me that they would like to _____. How do you feel about that?
- (To a sibling): How do you see my role in their care changing when I retire?

In the same vein, you will need to communicate to your family what your own wishes are as you get older. Be sure that they know what you have planned for yourself once you reach an age where you may not be able to live on your own.

You don't want to wait until you are under the stress of an unpleasant situation to make any of these decisions. You should make these decisions with a calm and rational mind. Decide ahead of time what is right for you and make sure that your family knows what that is. Some of the conversation starters are similar, but here you want to make your own wishes known as well. Remember to seek legal advice in order to determine how you can make certain stipulations in legal documents regarding your care.

- I'd like to talk to you (children) about the plans I've made for my care as I get older.

- I was talking to my own parents about their wishes for their care as they get older, and it made me think that I should probably make some similar decisions.
- I don't want you to worry about making the right decision for me later on, so I have laid out my wishes for you. I'd like to talk to you about them. Can we have that talk now?

These are just a few of the discussions that you may need to have with your family. People often get upset simply because their expectations of how a situation will happen are not met. They thought it would go one way, and it turns out to happen in a completely different way for which they were not prepared. So don't assume that they have the same picture in mind for your retirement as you do and you will prevent a great deal of conflict and stress in your relationships.

These may not seem like comfortable conversations to have, but they will make your life much easier in the long run. Talk to your family before they have a chance to be surprised by your choices; that way you can make sure that they have realistic expectations and that you do too.

Choosing When to Retire

The choice of when to retire is a very personal one. It depends on a number of factors that vary from person to person. In some cases, a person will choose to retire as soon as it is feasible to do so. You may feel that retirement simply cannot come soon enough. Or, you may want to stay at work as long as you can because of financial reasons or, for the lucky few of you, because you simply love what you do.

There are some unfortunate situations in which you may not be given much of a choice in when you retire. You may have health issues that require you to slow down to part-time work or to stop working entirely. Or, you may be offered an early retirement package, get laid off, or in some other way find yourself in a situation that means retirement is the best option – or at least the lesser of two bad options.

This could be a frustrating situation, very understandably. Even with all of your planning, an unforeseen or 'forced' retirement may be discouraging because it will feel as if you are now limited in what you are

able to do in your retirement. In times of economic recession, not only might you be laid off, but you may also find that you have lost some retirement savings that you were depending on. These are the events in life that we can't necessarily completely build into our 'structure' for preparing for retirement. You can plan all you want, but life still happens.

However, there is some logic to planning for the unknown. You can do this simply by adjusting your plans for retirement within the framework of your circumstances. If you have lived long enough to make it to retirement, then hopefully you have learned the tools that you need to deal with such unforeseen circumstances. The key is to maintain flexibility and responsiveness as your situation changes – not to create your plans and follow them blindly. We'll talk more about this in later chapters.

For now, let's think about the job that you have and how it will impact when you choose to retire. Whether you only work to live or you live to work, the answer to the question of when you are ready for retirement will depend largely on a number of factors related to your specific job. For example, some of these factors may be related to whether or not your job or employer:

- Offers a pension and/or retirement savings plan, and what the rules and requirements of the plan might be
- Allows you to continue health insurance coverage even if you retire before you are eligible for Social Security
- Provides the majority of your social network and opportunities
- Has been a large portion of your identity for the majority of your life and so might be difficult for you to leave
- Will provide additional training in your current role that you could put to use after your retirement
- May offer a promotion if you were to stay, which could lead to better retirement benefits such as a higher pension or profit sharing
- Might hire you back as a consultant after retirement
- Provides a valuable network of contacts that you could focus on building up now so that you will have other options for part-time or full-time work once you do retire

These factors address a number of additional areas to consider when it comes to retiring. The first aspects listed should remind you that it is very important for you to learn as much about your company's benefits as possible. As you get closer to retirement, you should be very aware of your benefits and how to calculate them. You might need to make an appointment with your HR representative to go over them.

Don't leave this meeting to the last minute – you should have this talk a few years before you plan to retire. Don't risk missing out on the maximum benefits you can receive just because you didn't know about them or because you missed taking the proper steps by a required deadline.

Another factor related to when it is time to retire has to do with how much your job has come to influence how you see yourself. It's not uncommon for a person who has worked for 10, 20, or 30 or more years to consider their job as part of their identity. You may think of yourself as 'a teacher' or 'a manager' as much as you would label yourself 'a parent' or 'a husband.'

For many of us, work is more than just a place we go 40 hours a week in order to earn a paycheck. Particularly if we work in an area that is distant from our own families, we may have created a pseudo-family structure at work. We may spend more time with our co-workers than with anyone else in our lives, and may have relationships at work that are incredibly important to us. If this is the case for you, then simply ending these relationships would likely lead to some loneliness or unhappiness. Your plans for retirement will need to include some way to ensure regular interaction with your old work 'family' after you retire.

Some of us may not need to retire. It may be that your job will allow you to continue to work indefinitely. If you love your job and are still able to perform it both physically and mentally, then you might choose to remain in your job past the expected retirement age. Delaying retirement is an intelligent strategy if you can do so and get a promotion, particularly if it will earn more money for you in retirement. Many pension plans (if they still exist at your company, count yourself lucky!) take into account the last two or three years of your earnings when determining your retirement benefits. So increasing this by a promotion would be beneficial. This is just another example of why you need to be fully aware of how your company's benefits work.

You could also stay at your job longer if you think doing so would help you to have more options after you retire. For example, if you could keep working and get additional training that you can use after you retire, that

could be a very valid reason to delay your retirement. Particularly if the training you would receive is specialized, highly marketable, or would be very difficult for you to reproduce on your own outside of the workplace. Getting this free training while you are also still earning a paycheck is a very smart move. Not only are you continuing to earn money now, but by staying a few years to get the training you want could make any other work you do in your retirement, whether part-time or full-time, more lucrative.

Remember as well that you don't want to burn any bridges when you do decide that it is time to go. If something changes in your life after you retire and you need to earn a salary again, it would be helpful for you to have good relationships with your past employers. They could be very valuable as references if you decide to pursue any other kind of work after you retire. Your former employer might even be able to hire you back as a consultant or on a part-time basis after you retire. So be certain that you give your employer plenty of notice of your plans so that they have time to plan for it as well.

Can They Make Me Retire?

As you get older, you may become concerned about being 'forced out' of your company. This concern is compounded by the fear that finding a new job when you are older might seem more difficult. If you are afraid of getting fired simply because of your age, take heart in the fact that it is illegal. If you are over the age of 40, federal employment laws consider you to be a member of a 'protected class,' with legal rights that prevent you from being discriminated against because of your age.

That doesn't mean that discrimination against older people, called ageism, doesn't exist and that people don't get away with it; certainly there are times in our workforce that discrimination of all forms can happen. But the law does mean that your employer cannot legally fire you simply because of your age. They would have to provide proof that you were fired for another cause such as failure to follow procedures or some other serious situation.

It's important to note, however, that the key to this protection is that you are still able to perform the duties of the job. If you cannot perform the duties of your position any longer, then you would not be protected. For example, let's imagine that you are a telephone line repair person. You find that you are no longer able to climb the telephone poles because of your health or your age. At that point, you would not necessarily be protected

from being fired or let go. However, you would possibly qualify for disability assistance from the company's insurance policies or from the Social Security Administration, depending on your individual circumstances and the benefits that your company offers.

Moving Forward

By now, you should have some insight into how ready you are for retirement. No matter how prepared you feel now, chances are you will still be counting the days until you can retire. Most of us will spend a number of daydreaming hours eagerly making plans for the free time that we will have, and dreaming about the freedom we will enjoy. Or, we may develop more ambitious plans involving a new business venture, new hobbies, places we want to visit, or projects that we're ready to start.

In fact, retirement might seem overwhelming with everything that you could do, and you're not sure how to start spending your time. Or, perhaps you find the discussion about retirement a bit stressful. You're not sure you have the tools, or the finances, to reach the goals that you have set for yourself. In the following chapters, we'll discuss some strategies and practices that you can incorporate into your life – both before and after you retire – that can help you to make certain that you will reach the goals that you have set for your retirement.

Chapter Two:

Do You Have Enough Money?

*The question isn't at what age I want to retire,
it's at what income.*

~George Foreman

The biggest concern for people approaching retirement age is usually whether or not they have enough money set aside that they can retire without being in dire financial straits. In fact, the hope is that the situation would be better than that. We'd all like to retire with enough money to enjoy this period of our lives and all of the time and possibilities that it offers.

First, let's acknowledge that the idea of saving for retirement is, in terms of human history, a relatively new concept. Most of our grandparents wouldn't have had retirement savings, or not as much as we need today since their expected life span was shorter than ours. Unless they had an inheritance, they would have worked until work was no longer an option or until their death. Very few people had the kind of wealth that meant it was realistic for them to plan for a time when they would be able to stop working.

Even if our grandparents had savings, they might not have considered those savings to be specifically for retirement. Instead, the savings might just have been for a rainy day. If they actually did have the foresight to save for a time when they would no longer be able to work, they were not able to benefit from tax-deferred programs like we can today.

In contrast, these days most of us do expect to be able to retire. With increasing life spans, the length of time that we will actually spend in retirement is also growing. While this is good because it will mean a longer period of time to enjoy yourself, it also means a longer period of time that you will need to support yourself.

Hopefully you have already spoken to a qualified financial advisor who can help you to determine when you can retire and at what level of income you can do so. If you haven't yet sought the help of a professional, please realize that only a trained, certified financial planner can give you an

accurate, individualized review of exactly how to make the best investments for your situation. Remember that tax laws change, as do rules around retirement accounts. Seeking help from a professional ensures that you have the most accurate information at the time that you are ready to make your decisions.

How Much is Enough?

It can be difficult to know how much money you will need in order to retire. An easy answer to the question 'how much is enough' is simple; as much as possible. However, you can make some intelligent predictions based on what you know about your life now and what you know you will want to do in retirement.

The amount of money that you will need for retirement depends on a number of factors regarding your personal situation such as:

- Your goals for retirement
- Your family, including current or expected dependents
- The cost of living where you live now or where you will live
- Your health and health care benefits
- Your current assets and debts, as well as how these will change over time
- The kind of lifestyle changes you are willing to make and how that will impact your expenses

But the amount you need can also depend on some factors that you can't necessarily control, like the rise and fall of the economy or unforeseen emergencies. So the best you can do in order to handle planning for those situations is just to build into your plan some additional money beyond what you think you will need.

A good rule of thumb is to have a minimum of six months of living expenses in savings. That way if the unforeseen should happen, you have enough money to continue living on until you are able to sort out your options. Obviously, if you can do more, you should. But you want to have a

good balance between savings you can reach immediately if you need it and savings that is earning higher interest for you in CDs or other investment vehicles.

Taking Advantage of Your Retirement Savings Programs

Speaking of savings, hopefully you have taken advantage of the retirement savings programs that were made available to you at work. Since you don't pay taxes on the money that you put into a retirement account, your taxable income is lower at the end of the year. You'll pay less taxes overall, so you're actually saving in two ways – first through the money in the savings account and second through the money you don't have to pay in taxes.

Many companies offer a match of some kind to the money that you put into the account. For example, if you put in 4% of your salary, they may put in another 2% for you. Some companies are even more generous, providing full matches for whatever you put in. If you haven't been making deposits into your retirement savings account in order to earn the maximum match, please consider doing so. You're throwing away free money if you don't take advantage of this kind of program. Think about it as a raise you can give yourself. In our example, putting that 4% of your salary into retirement savings is like giving yourself a 2% raise. And who would turn down a free raise?

The IRS limits the amount of money that you can put into a retirement savings plan each year. But there is an exception to the rule. If you are over the age of 55, you are allowed to make 'catch-up' contributions in order to increase your overall savings amount closer to what it would have been if you had been making contributions all along. There is a limit to the catch-up contributions you can make as well, and it changes from year to year. Ask your HR representative for information on the current maximum or just check www.irs.gov for the latest information.

One word of caution though; do not rely on the catch-up contributions if you don't have to. The reason for this is simple – it's called compound interest. The longer that your money has to earn interest, the more you will end up with. If you want to see exactly how much, you can find investment calculators online. A person can almost double their retirement savings if they save for 30 years instead of 25. That's the magic of compound interest, and it should never be underestimated.

Social Security

With the advent of the Great Depression, more than 50% of senior citizens were living in poverty. Roosevelt's response to this national crisis was the New Deal. Among other social programs, it included a form of social insurance for the elderly that would prevent such dismal poverty levels from occurring again. The Social Security Act of 1935 created the federal Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) program, commonly called Social Security.

Anyone who has worked approximately 10 years in their lifetime and paid into the Social Security system will be entitled to a monthly Social Security payment when they reach the eligible age. If you are a widow or widower, you may still be eligible for Social Security that would have been paid to your spouse.

In some cases, you can even receive partial Social Security payments if you are divorced from someone who is eligible to receive Social Security payments. It depends on the length of time you were married and both your and your ex-spouse's contributions into the Social Security system.

In order to qualify for Social Security, you must have worked long enough that you have accumulated a minimum amount of 'work credits.' The number that is required depends on when you were born. A full year of full-time work will earn you four 'work credits.'

If you were born after 1929, you need 40 work credits to qualify for retirement. This means 10 years of work, though you don't have to work them consecutively. If you were born before 1929, then the number of credits you need is reduced by 1 for each year you were born prior to 1929. So, for example, if you were born in 1925, you would need only 36 credits to qualify.

The age at which you become eligible for Social Security distributions depends on when you were born. Due to extended life expectations, combined with the surge of Baby Boomers either in retirement or nearing it, the Social Security fund is being drawn down faster than was expected. This means that those of us who will be in the next wave of retirees will have to wait longer to become eligible to start receiving payments.

The number of credits that are required for your survivors to be eligible for your benefits depends on how old you are at your death. You will not need more than 40 credits no matter what your age, but you will need fewer the younger you are.

How Your Retirement Age Affects Your Benefits

As of now, the minimum retirement age is 62 if you are willing to accept partial benefits. If you want full benefits, you will have to wait until as late as 67, depending on your birth date. If you decide that you can retire at 62 but don't qualify to receive full Social Security benefits until 67, you will receive 70% of the distribution you would have received at 67.

There are both pros and cons to retiring at 62. Although you will receive less per month, you will be receiving it for more months than if you retired at 67. You could actually retire after age 67 (or your eligible age), and earn what are called 'delayed retirement credits.' These would give you higher payments as a 'reward' for retiring later.

Remember too that you can stop working at any time and choose not to receive your Social Security payments until your full eligibility date. Those who have planned well enough or earned enough that they can retire early can decide that they have plenty of savings or other source of income (such as a spouse's earnings) that you can afford your living experiences until it is time for you to start drawing Social Security. Hopefully, someone who chooses to take this route understands the concept of working credits, and won't stop working until they have the right number of credits to receive the full Social Security payment for which he or she is eligible.

The Social Security Administration provides some good information about retirement on their website. The website has a number of tools such as a calculator that will let you figure out your benefit at different ages:

<http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/agereduction.htm>.

Of course, there are great concerns about the status of the Social Security system in America. The generation following the Baby Boomers worries that the system will be bankrupt by then. For most people near retirement age, Social Security payments will not be enough of an income to live on. Even if Social Security covers their basic shelter and food, they may have health costs that they are unable to pay despite Medicare coverage.

Since none of us can predict the future, we should be preparing for the possibilities that could occur; this means that in order to prepare for retirement, Americans will need to consider making additional investments, and at an earlier age, if they want to be certain of their ability to care for their needs later in life.

Living on a Fixed Income

In most cases, once you retire you will be living on a fixed income. The payments you get from Social Security and your retirement accounts are the same each month. So if you know that you'll be getting \$1,000 a month from Social Security, the amount of retirement savings that you should have will be whatever amount will give you monthly distributions that, combined with your Social Security payments, are large enough to cover your expenses.

If you don't have other savings, you will want to make sure your monthly payments also allow for extra income you can put into a savings account in the case of emergencies. There will always be inconveniences in retirement, just like in pre-retirement. There will be cars that break down or repairs needed at the house.

Of course, you might also be allowed to withdraw your entire retirement savings account at the eligible age and reinvest it on your own, but you will certainly want to investigate your options carefully and thoroughly before doing so.

Remember that although your income will be fixed, your expenses will not be. Inflation will continue to increase the costs of everything that you will need, from food to gas to travel. So you will need to plan your disbursements to increase over time, or you will find yourself being less and less able to pay for your life as time goes on.

Another item to consider is if you will want or need your retirement funds in different amounts at different times of your retirement. For example, while you are still in your sixties and early seventies, you might want to do as much traveling as possible because you expect that your physical health will decline over time, making travel more difficult at a later age.

Or, you may still have children in college, and you expect that they will need your financial assistance in the next few years. Not only for tuition and other college expenses, but for major life events like weddings or the births of your grandchildren.

If you still have debt that you need to pay when you retire, or if your mortgage is not paid off, then you can expect that you will need more money at the beginning of your retirement period as well. Once your debts are paid off, you will need less money each month.

Of course, every situation is different. You might want to start your own new business, and will need a large chunk of investment capital at the beginning. Or you might want to move from your current home and into a more 'vacation' type home that will take some investment in the beginning as well.

Whatever your personal needs are, you will want to be careful that you can distinguish between needs and wants, particularly if you are concerned that you won't have enough money for retirement. If you don't already have a budget, it would be helpful for you to draw one up that illustrates what you spend your money on now. Then you can examine which of the expenses will still be necessary after you retire.

For example, if you currently spend \$40 a month on dry cleaning and \$50 a month on parking in a lot near your office, then you can expect that after retirement you won't be paying the parking fees and you probably won't be paying as much in dry cleaning. If you used to commute 20 miles each way but now you will be spending most of your time in your own neighborhood or area, then your gasoline costs will certainly go down.

At the same time, some of your needs may increase in cost. If you were on a company health insurance plan at your job, you might want to keep it because it offers you more benefits than Medicare alone. Except in rare cases, you will have to pay for this health insurance after retirement, although it's often at a better rate than you could get as an individual. Other benefits you might have had through work may need to be replaced as well, such as a vehicle, communications equipment, or even a gym membership.

After you've spent some time thinking about how your budget will change once you retire, you can also begin to identify which expenses are true 'needs' and which are not. Of those that are not, you may feel that it's important to keep them anyway. You may be willing to sacrifice in some areas in order to continue getting your hair professionally highlighted or your car regularly detailed.

There is no right or wrong to this exercise. It's entirely up to you what you want to pay for and what you are comfortable eliminating. Just realize that the more you leave in your budget, the more you are going to have to receive in terms of your monthly payments after you retire. You may need to think about additional sources of income that you could create in order to meet your budget.

Paying for the Lifestyle You Envision

Even before retirement, one of the smartest things that you can do for your financial well-being is to have multiple streams of income. By doing so, you know that if one income stream dries up, you have other income coming in. Most of us think about having just one income stream – our job.

We've already talked about two possible income streams for after you retire - your Social Security payment and your distributions from retirement savings. But what other income streams could you possibly create?

A common response is to get another job after retirement. Whether full-time or part-time, another job would certainly help you to add additional income for whatever length of time you are willing or able to continue working. Especially for retirees who live alone or away from their families, another job can be a great way to keep yourself involved in the outside world. A job outside of the home can help you to avoid depression, a common affliction for the newly retired.

In the next chapter, we'll look in more detail at what you can do to find a job or other way of earning extra money.

Chapter Three:

The Active Retirement Lifestyle

Age is only a number, a cipher for the records. A man can't retire his experience. He must use it.

~Bernard Baruch

If you have been looking forward to retirement as a time that you would be able to sit back, relax, and do nothing, then more power to you. If you're retiring, you've worked hard for some time in order to be able to do so. This is the time to reward yourself. Take some time and do whatever you feel like doing, for as long as you feel like doing it. Sleep in late, take long strolls, and visit all the friends you've been meaning to catch up with, or just become a professional couch potato for awhile.

Next you'll probably start to feel like tackling some of those projects you've been meaning to get to around the house. You might spend a few days cleaning out your closet, organizing that stack of pictures in your drawer, or rearranging the garage to make room for a new craft or hobby. This is a 'puttering' phase, where it might not have hit you yet that you won't be going back to work after a few weeks. However, it's inevitable that this phase will come to an end.

Staying Active in Retirement

Once you've enjoyed puttering about or doing nothing for awhile, there will probably come a time when doing nothing feels more like being nothing. Not only because most people enjoy being productive, but because retirement can actually contribute to depression. It is estimated that as much as 3% of retired people are clinically depressed. Since the transition stage seems to be the time that retirees are most vulnerable to depression, it may benefit you to have a plan in place on what you will do to stay active once you retire.

Active doesn't necessarily mean a full-time, non-stop pursuit of some new goal. But it does mean being able to continue to feel that you are

contributing in some way, shape, or form to your family, your community, your former industry, or your fellow man in general. Or it could simply mean that you are still actively enjoying your life. That you are focusing on having fun, learning new things, or having new adventures.

There are other benefits to staying active in retirement. Those who remain active tend to remain healthier for longer than those who don't. This is due to a number of factors, but health professionals believe that it mostly has to do with the way that staying active influences your attitude and general outlook. If you are active in something that you enjoy doing or that you feel is helping others, your stress level will be reduced. This can help to avoid hypertension, sleep disorders, gastric disorders, and even cancer.

Of course the key here is doing something that you enjoy or that you feel is helping others. It is true that some retirees may have to take additional work on in their retirement. If you are in this situation, it will be tempting to take the first job that comes along because you will feel better knowing that there is a paycheck coming in. However, when you understand that the way you spend your time can actually impact your health, you may want to keep looking for a job or even a new career that will allow you to earn the cash you need while still enjoying the work.

Working in Retirement

Wait, we're talking about work here? Well, it depends on what you think of as 'work.' Some of us have based a great deal of our self-identity on having a job. Perhaps it delivered some kind of social status, position of influence, or sense of independence that we feel that we simply don't have without a job.

It's not uncommon to miss working. Maybe you truly liked your old job, and you now want to do it on a part-time basis and on your own terms. You know you have valuable skills to offer, and you would enjoy staying active in the industry. For the right job and the right income, you might even go back full-time.

Here is another point at which you should pull out your notebook and do some brainstorming. Consider some of the following questions:

- Is my profession one that I can do relatively easily on my own on a part-time basis? (This is usually true for professional type jobs)

where you can charge by the hour, although you could still do other jobs part-time as well.)

- Is it possible that I could come back to work for my current organization as a consultant, part-time, or 'fill-in' employee?
- Are there aspects of my job that I didn't like and would like to avoid in any future work?
- What contacts do I have in my field or industry that I would feel comfortable calling for information about a part-time or full-time position?
- Are there any classes or certifications to take or skills to improve upon that would make me a more competitive applicant for other positions in the industry?
- What related industries need similar skills to mine? What other types of jobs might I qualify for?

Of course, maybe you don't want to consider doing the same thing that you used to do. For many retirees, this is the time to try a career that they may have pursued had money, timing, education, or family not been an issue. Perhaps you would have loved to be a writer, but you were concerned that you wouldn't make enough money to support your family. Or, maybe you've always enjoyed sailing as a hobby. Now you can think of nothing better than getting paid to take tourists out on your sailboat.

If you have enough savings that you don't need to earn a true living with a new career or job, then now is the time that you could pursue writing, sailing, or any possible career simply for the enjoyment of pursuing it. There are simply endless possibilities for retirees who have enough of an income that they can afford to earn very little or nothing at all.

This kind of freedom is something you have worked hard to create and it is something that you should truly treasure. Give yourself permission to consider possibilities that you would have scoffed at as 'unrealistic' or 'silly' when you were still in need of a steady, regular job. Look around you at people you know, people you admire, or people you might even envy. What experiences are they having that you would like to have as well?

We'll talk more about pursuing your passion in Chapter Six, but consider some of the following questions if you're in this category of having enough money to take the time to learn a new career:

- If I am considering a new profession, am I willing to put in the time to learn necessary skills or earn required certifications?
- Can I or do I want to work part time or full time in a new type of position where I might be an 'entry-level' employee again?
- What are the aspects of a new career that are important to me? For example, do I want to be creative, work with people, or learn something new and challenging?
- Is this new profession something that might require that I move in order to take advantage of the most opportunities? If so, have I discussed that possibility with my spouse or loved ones?

Or perhaps you would like to try your hand at starting your own business. You think you could make a great consultant for the types of companies you used to work for, or you have always loved music and you want to open up a music school.

There are plenty of resources available to you if you are bitten by the entrepreneurial bug. Check to see where the nearest branch of the Small Business Administration (SBA) is located, or visit their website at www.sba.gov. The SBA provides a number of resources to entrepreneurs and small business owners, including advice on how to write a business plan, how to conduct good market research before starting your business, and how to find funding to help you get started. The SBA also offers training classes where you can focus on specific topics like finance, hiring employees, or more basic topics like what's required in your state to start a business.

You can also check with the Department of Housing and Economic Development (HUD) to see whether or not your community receives federal grant money for assisting new businesses in the area. You may find that your local government offers low interest loans to new or small businesses that are able to provide a job for a low or moderate income person. Depending on where you live and how much retirement income you will earn, you might qualify to be that low-moderate income person.

Don't forget about the local chamber of commerce or local continuing education programs. Often you can find courses aimed at entrepreneurs through these venues as well. Any of these or other programs they offer

may also prove to be excellent networking opportunities. You never know who you might meet – maybe a partner for your new idea, or maybe your first big client.

Of course for some retirees, working after retirement isn't an option; it's a necessity. You might know already that you don't have enough income to support yourself in retirement and so you must do some kind of wage-earning work.

If this is your case, be sure that you know how much money you need to meet your budget, including some extra amount for savings. Then you'll know whether or not job offers you receive or the rates you could charge as a consultant will result in you earning enough money.

Back to Work

If you do want to earn some additional money in retirement, and you have the flexibility to wait until you can get the type of work that you want, what kind of work would that be? What type of environment do you want to work in? At home? In a large office with other people? Do you want to work regularly or only when you want to or need to?

As the Baby Boomers retire, there will be more retired people than we've ever had before. And when they go, they will be taking a great deal of institutional or organizational knowledge with them. These may be the people that founded the company, that built the programs, or that remember all the history of how the company got to where it is today.

These retirees may prove to be a valuable resource for those who are left behind. In fact, it is expected that the Baby Boomer retirement wave will create a sort of job vacuum; the people in middle management will be 'sucked' up into upper management positions – positions that they might not be fully qualified for. They may be lacking the experience, information, or connections that their predecessors had. So who are they going to call?

Chances are, they will call their recent retirees and try to get them back on a part or full-time basis. But so will their competitors. There will be fierce competition for some skill sets, and Baby Boomer retirees with marketable skills will likely be in an enviable position. They will not only be able to find the kind of job that they want, but they may possibly find the kind of salary that they didn't earn even at the height of their career.

What Workers over 50 Want

A survey by salary.com showed that there are five rewards that most workers who are 50 or over want in a career:

1. Flexible Schedule - the ability to manage their own time. For some, this means their work hours, but also it applies to the way they do their work. No micromanagement!
2. Passion for the Work – not just working for work’s sake, retirees and older workers want to love what they do.
3. Mental Stimulation and Challenge – these workers want to put their experience to work and know that they are contributing. Mindless busy work will not be satisfying.
4. Skill Enhancement (on job experience) – These older workers want to learn new tricks. Most older workers want to keep learning; perhaps partly due to the fear of becoming obsolete.
5. Keeping Active – give them enough to do!

The list of those seeking work after 50 will not be short. According to AARP, 70% of all workers expect to still be working after the age of 50, though most of them hope it will be part-time. There are specific industries that AARP names as being good choices for older workers because of the growth rate and the demand for workers.

On the following page is the list of the top 50 companies for older workers in 2008 according to AARP. Of the top 20 employers, half of them are health care companies. This doesn't mean just medical care staff; these companies will need administrative, management, financial and other types of assistance too. The companies are also widely spread around the country, meaning that you may not need to move in order to work for one of them.

The companies were evaluated on a series of criteria including (from AARP.com):

- Recruiting practices
- Opportunities for training, education, and career development
- Workplace accommodations

- Alternative work options, such as flexible scheduling, job-sharing, and phased retirement
- Employee health and pension benefits
- Benefits for retirees

Hold down the CTRL button and click on the name of any of the companies in the list if you'd like to learn more about them. The links will take you to an article about each organization on the AARP website.

Top 50 Employers for Workers Over 50 - 2008

1. [Cornell University](#)
2. [Scripps Health](#)
3. [SC Johnson & Son, Inc.](#)
4. [The YMCA of Greater Rochester](#)
5. [Lee Memorial Health System](#)
6. [Securian](#)
7. [First Horizon National Corporation](#)
8. [Stanley Consultants](#)
9. [Bon Secours Richmond Health System](#)
10. [Blue Cross Blue Shield Association](#)
11. [National Institutes of Health](#)
12. [Central Florida Health Alliance](#)
13. [Brevard Public Schools](#)
14. [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#)

15. [Atlantic Health](#)
16. [TriHealth, Inc.](#)
17. [Mercy Health System](#)
18. [Adecco Group North America](#)
19. [Beaumont Hospitals](#)
20. [L.L.Bean, Inc.](#)
21. [Massachusetts General Hospital](#)
22. [Jennings Center for Older Adults](#)
23. [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina](#)
24. [Virginia Commonwealth University](#)
25. [Pinnacle Assurance](#)
26. [Saint Vincent Health System](#)
27. [National Rural Electric Cooperative Association](#)
28. [Centegra Health System](#)
29. [Frankford Candy & Chocolate Co.](#)
30. [Nashoba Valley Medical Center](#)
31. [George Mason University](#)
32. [Wells Fargo & Company](#)
33. [Horizon BlueCross BlueShield of New Jersey](#)
34. [Harvard University](#)
35. [Northern California Presbyterian Homes & Services](#)
36. [Manheim](#)
37. [ACUITY](#)
38. [DentaQuest](#)

39. [The Aerospace Corporation](#)
40. [Express Employment Professionals](#)
41. [Nevada Federal Credit Union](#)
42. [Pepco Holdings, Inc.](#)
43. [Michelin North America](#)
44. [INTUITIVE Research and Technology Corporation](#)
45. [Pearson](#)
46. [CTTRANSIT](#)
47. [Vanguard](#)
48. [Centers for New Horizons](#)
49. [Hanson Professional Services, Inc.](#)
50. [FINRA](#)

Top Jobs for Workers over 50

Whether you're interested in a top 50 company or just want a job you'll enjoy after retirement, consider what you might need to do to get one of the top 5 jobs for workers over 50. This list was created by the Money department of CNN.com. All of the fields are expected to show significant growth over the next ten years, and all of them offer a decent minimum salary.

1. Non-Profit Executive: You could choose an organization that serves a group or champions a cause that you are passionate about. Imagine going to work every day and knowing that you're making a difference in the world.

Salary Range: \$41,600 to \$113,500 or higher for national or international organizations

10-year Job Growth: 27%

Experience Required: Varies, but normally a bachelor's degree and 5 to 8 years related or relevant experience

2. Patient Representative: With the expansion of the health care industry, it's only natural that related jobs will expand as well. In this job, you'll help patients, their families, and the staff at the hospital or clinic to communicate, solve problems, and basically help patients to understand their options.

Salary Range: \$34,700 to \$60,400

10 Year Job Growth: 22%

Experience Required: Bachelor's degree plus 2 to 4 years experience in related field

3. Celebrant/Religious Leader: With a growing population comes the growth in the need for people who can help celebrate the major milestones in our lives. Whether you choose to become a religious official or not, you can still become qualified to officiate at weddings and other ceremonies.

Salary Range: \$26,900 to \$77,200

10 Year Job Growth: 12%

Experience Required: Bachelor's degree, may need training courses and/or certification. Must have a state license to perform marriages.

4. Financial Advisor: As pensions have shrunk and planning for retirement requires more independent action, financial advisors are being sought more frequently. If you want to start your own practice, this is an excellent field to choose because about half of all financial advisors are self-employed.

Salary Range: \$44,300 to \$144,200

10 Year Job Growth: 12%

Experience Required: Bachelor's degree in finance, math, accounting, economics, business, or law is needed. You'll also have to get a certification as a financial planner and a license to sell securities and

insurance.

5. Public School Teacher: Want summers and guaranteed holiday time off? Consider going back to school – as a teacher. There is such a demand for teachers that there are fast-track programs for older workers who want to teach. If you have a math or science background, you will be able to get a teaching job very quickly.

Salary Range: \$41,500 to \$64,100

10 Year Job Growth: 14%

Experience Required: Varies by state, but you'll need a bachelor's degree and a state teachers' license.

Remaining Competitive in the Modern Workplace

If you want to go back to work, you may need to consider upgrading your skills in order to remain competitive. As some of the jobs listed above show, you might need to earn a certification or pursue a license of some kind to qualify for one of these top 'growth' jobs.

You may not have been in any kind of classroom in years, but that doesn't mean that you can't succeed at going back to school. If you adopt an attitude that learning is something you can do throughout your lifetime, then you can keep a number of possibilities open for you during your working life – and after.

If you need to 'brush up' on certain skills before going back to school, there are certainly resources to help you do so. The school you're considering going to may actually have some study or review information you can use. Or, you can find texts covering whatever topic you need in either commercial or university bookstores. Once you get into the 'swing' of school again, if you're studying something you're passionate about then school won't be work – it will be growth.

There's one area that, for older workers in particular, may need some attention. If you are not comfortable working on a computer, you will definitely need to learn. At a minimum, you will need to know how to operate a PC (a computer that uses Microsoft Windows operating systems),

and probably also Microsoft Word. Depending on the job, you may also need other software programs.

Be sure that you know how to use email as well. You will need to know the following in order to operate in today's office:

- How to write, send, file, and forward an email
- How to find an email address in your company directory or in your personal address book
- How to use the cc and bcc functions – and what the difference is
- How to search through your emails when you're looking for a specific one
- How to save a draft when you haven't finished writing an email
- How to attach files to an email you send and how to open and save them from an email you receive

Depending on the type of email software your company uses, the way that you do these things will differ slightly. But all of the basic commands are the same. If you need help, ask someone in your life to show you how to use email, or take a basic computer class through a community college or continuing education program.

Be sure that you understand the etiquette of email as well. You may receive some emails that are short and could even seem terse. It's important not to take this personally. In a busy office full of people who also send 'text messages' on their cell phones (a kind of email that uses 'shorthand' expressions to save characters and is sent over a cell phone), it's not unusual to receive short, clipped sounding emails.

You may also find yourself having a conversation over email. When we communicate only in writing, we are using 7% of our communication ability (the rest is our body language, facial expressions, tone & speed of voice). So don't allow a conversation to go on for too long on email, as misunderstandings become more and more possible. In other words, don't keep an exchange on email if you think it would save time and or prevent misunderstandings to pick up the phone.

As much as our society uses email, social networking websites have finally become even more used than email. If you don't have any idea what

a social networking site is, ask someone under the age of 30. Chances are they use at least one, if not all of the major sites. On these websites like Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter, you create a 'profile' about yourself. People can find your profile and see anything that you put on it. You can post pictures, video, and share your latest news all at one time to anyone who sees your page. You can also send and receive messages to others on the network.

You may not need these sites for your job, but they could help you find one. You could look for people who work in a certain company, in a career you're interested in, or even look up old friends and acquaintances who might know of openings in your field. A growing number of companies are creating their own pages on these sites as a way to draw customers, but you can learn something about them this way too.

Speaking of company websites, if you do go job hunting after you retire, you will need to understand how to navigate through company websites to find and apply to job postings. There are major job posting sites such as Monster.com or CareerBuilder.com, or even RetirementJobs.com. But most large companies also post their own job listings. You will need to have an electronic resume, and you will need to be sure it is in the format that the company requires. If you aren't sure how to create one, ask for help from a friend or relative – or ask the instructor if you're taking a computer class.

Finally, the web is also an excellent place to research the company or companies that you want to work for. Especially if you get an offer of an interview! You can use the company's website to learn about their history, their mission, their organization, and their latest news. Then when you go to the interview you will be able to ask intelligent questions that show that you were interested enough to do your homework.

Working from Home

The internet has not just changed the way that we communicate and the way that we look for information that we need. It has also changed the way that work can be done. More people than ever are working from home, either on a part-time or a full-time basis.

There was once a bias against allowing people to work from their homes because of the fear that they would goof off instead of getting their work done. But more and more companies are finding that this simply isn't

the case. Workers are happier when they are allowed to work from home at least part of the time, and happier workers make for more productive workers.

Telecommuting is also becoming more popular in large cities because it saves on commute time and costs. Allowing telecommuting makes a company more attractive to potential employees, and for some workers is a more important factor than salary alone when choosing whether or not to apply for a job.

Telecommuting on such a wide scale has only been made possible by developments in internet and networking technologies. Files and documents can all be shared electronically, allowing the home-worker to access the same information they once could only access if they were sitting in their office.

Telephone features allow companies to mask the location of the worker to the caller. A customer or client can call the office and be transferred to your home phone seamlessly, and even be routed to your office voicemail if you are not able to answer at the time. Video conferencing used to take specialized, expensive equipment. But now anyone can communicate by video to anyone else as long as they have a webcam and a high speed internet connection.

Telecommuting has also changed the way that people perform job searches. You are no longer limited to pursuing jobs that are located in your area. You can find telecommuting work for companies in other states or even other countries.

This kind of freedom to look for work also applies to the freedom to move around while you work. If you want to travel but you also need to earn an income, look for telecommuting positions. You could conceivably travel around the world as you work, sending your assignments in from a café in Paris one day and a piazza in Rome the next. As long as you have access to the internet, you may find that your imagination and sense of adventure are the only limits to where you work.

Finding Legitimate Work at Home Jobs

In talking about the legitimate work-at-home jobs out there, I'd first like to talk about the obstacles you might come across in trying to find one.

With all the benefits of the internet age, there are also certainly some issues.

In particular, there are people who use the internet as a way to falsely advertise and attempt to cheat others out of their money with an offer of work-at-home employment or online money-making programs. In fact, one of the most prolific types of scams on the internet is the promise that, in exchange for money, you will be given the 'secrets' to finding work-at-home jobs. Almost without exception, these are scams.

Here are some very common work-at-home job categories that can be very convincing and alluring, but in fact are a waste of your time and effort and could end up costing you a great deal of money:

- 'Work for Google' kits, also called by names like 'Google Business' or 'Google Cash.' These programs are usually offered for just shipping and handling of less than \$2.00. They declare that you can get paid by Google just for 'posting links' on your website as well as on blogs, forums, etc.

What they don't tell you is that once you give them your credit card information for the so-called shipping and handling, you will be authorizing them to charge you outrageous monthly fees for being part of their 'system.' This information is sometimes listed in the Terms of Service, which the scammers are hoping you won't read, or they just continually charge you without even adding the information to their website.

While you can earn some money through Google, it is not with this type of program. The real way to earn money with Google is through Google ads, their advertising program. You allow Google to post ads on your website, and get some payout if customers click those links and buy from the advertised company. But unless you have a website, this doesn't apply.

You could also become affiliate of other companies, where you help to market their products and you get paid by the company, not Google. But again, you need your own website or you need to be prolific in posting to online blogs or forums before you would see any income. Visit clickbank.com if you want more information on how to do this. You won't get rich quick, and it will take time to figure out which programs work best, but it is possible to earn income this way.

Bottom Line: Don't ever pay someone for job information. If it's a legitimate opportunity, the person recruiting you gets paid by the company you'll be working for – not by you.

- On-line Surveys - these companies declare that you can earn loads of cash by filling out online surveys for companies that want your opinion. The sites will claim that these companies will pay you because it helps them have a clearer idea of what their target customers want from a product.

Again, some of these sites will require that you pay a fee in order to have access to their list of surveys. But they will try to convince you that you will make your money back that very day. What they don't tell you is that although there are paying surveys, very few of us will qualify to take them. You can spend a great deal of time answering questions about your household on a survey, only to be told afterwards that you don't qualify for the offer.

Or, more commonly, you will be offered the chance to 'test' certain products in exchange for a few dollars added to your survey earnings. However, the tests involve signing up for a product, service, or offering that you don't necessarily want.

For example, you might get \$10 if you sign up for a credit monitoring service that charges you \$14.99 a month. The company does say that you can call within 30 days to cancel the service, but again they are betting that you will forget. Or, when you do call to cancel, you will get the 'voice mail' runaround, and they hope you will give up.

The survey site is getting paid big bucks for being an affiliate for so many companies at one time. But if you were to somehow change your mind on your subscription on a product or service you just registered for, the site will lose their commission too. So they will usually require that you 'accumulate' a certain balance in your account before you are able to withdraw any of your earnings. That may mean you will have to register for 10, 15, or more offers in order to meet the limit. The site is betting that you will forget to un-register for some or most of them before they get their 'cut.'

Bottom Line: Don't expect to earn any serious cash with surveys. You can certainly check to see if you qualify for the more lucrative surveys these sites offer, but they are usually very narrowly

defined. For example, a category might be something like 'Hispanic women over 55 who plan to retire in the next two years but not move.' And even if you do find a survey that you qualify for, the minimum earnings requirements may make it difficult for you to ever see any cash in your pocket.

- Check cashing or processing – in these scams, it usually starts with an email. The first emails with this scheme came from someone claiming to be a 'Nigerian Prince' in need of your assistance. Some sad tale would follow in which he would ask you to cash a check for him, keeping a portion of the cash for yourself as a thank you, and forwarding the rest to him.

The very convincing-looking fake check would make it past your bank teller, but eventually would prove to be a fraud. And of course, you would have already sent the cash to the 'prince' via Western Union. It's sad to think how many people might have lost money this way.

But of course, as people got wise to the emails, the criminals came up with another way to get your money. Now, they post 'job ads' across the internet, and call the process of stealing from you 'check processing' or 'pay roll assistance' or some other such seemingly innocuous title.

Bottom Line: Never accept a check or other form of payment that you are then supposed to keep a portion of while forwarding on the rest. At the least, you are assisting in money laundering. At the worst, you are being taken for a fool.

- Data entry scams – these often seem harmless at first. You sign up with a company that promises you can earn hundreds a day either processing sales or entering rebate data for a company – often the name of a company that you will recognize.

What they don't tell you is that you actually have to pay to advertise and sell a product in order to get that sale to enter or that rebate to process. Which, of course, you have to pay them to find out how to do.

Bottom line: Remember, you shouldn't have to pay to find a legitimate job. And you certainly shouldn't have to pay to do the work of selling products for another company.

- Top 3 Online Jobs or Work-at-Home Jobs – these are scams that even say they are helping you avoid scams! The website personality or company will tell you that they have researched all kinds of internet jobs and that 99% of them are scams – except the following three!

Of course, which three they list depends on which companies are behind the website. It could be a site the scam companies created themselves, or it could be a site some enterprising individual created in order to boost their affiliate sales. They get you to buy one of the three products they are touting and they get a commission from the company. But you still end up with lost money – and what's worse, a deflated spirit.

Bottom Line: This is simply an attempt to gain your trust in what is almost certainly a company that should not be trusted!

- eBay and Dropshipping Scams – It is absolutely true that you can make money on eBay and other electronic commerce sites. If you can find a product at a lower price than it commonly sells for online, you can make some sales and make a profit.

However, you need to do some careful research before you purchase any products from other companies online. Ask yourself why they are selling a product to you at a lower price than what eBay sellers are charging. Why wouldn't they sell the items on eBay themselves?

There are warehouse companies, wholesale companies, and liquidation companies that do sell things in bulk in order to move quantities, and so you might get a lower per-item price than what you can sell it for on eBay if you can find these deals. But remember a few important things:

- Always think about the fees you will have to pay to eBay and to PayPal (if you plan to accept payments across the internet – an absolute must if you want to be competitive) when you consider whether there is a profit to be made on an item. Be sure you

have a realistic idea of the shipping cost as well. You would hate to end up losing money because you forgot to include all the costs.

- Beware of counterfeiters! Some experts estimate that as much as 70% of the electronics and designer items offered on eBay are actually fakes. If you do any minimal research, you will come across sites happy to sell you these fakes, most of them based in China.

Don't be tempted – it's illegal to sell fake merchandise and attempt to pass it off as the real thing. In addition, eBay has staff members whose job it is to spot fakes. If they believe you are selling a fake item, your listing will be shut down and no fees will be reimbursed. They might even shut down your account, preventing you from selling anything at all.

- Never send anyone cash as payment for items you want to sell, no matter what reason they give you. If they don't want you to have any recourse to the money you spend with them, there's a reason.

Another possible scenario that you can run into that could be a scam or just a bad idea is a company offering expensive dropshipping options. Dropshipping is where you make a sale and the company providing the product ships it for you from their warehouse to your customer. Many of them offer you a website as well, and all of them charge you a fee. The fee could be just on a per-item basis, but more and more they are charging monthly fees from under twenty dollars to several hundred dollars.

There are some valid dropshippers out there – and there are even some companies that will set up dropshipping arrangements for you if you buy enough, even if they don't currently offer it to everyone. But, then there are some companies that appear valid but offer no real value because their pricing is too high to be competitive.

By the time you pay for their item, their dropshipping fee, monthly membership fees to be a part of their site, shipping and handling costs, and eBay and PayPal fees (if applicable), you will have to price your item much higher than others just to recover your costs! Other problems with dropshippers can be that they either misrepresent products, pricing, or speed of shipping, so that you end up with angry customers.

Bottom Line: Buy with caution and sell with caution. Research sales of the product you want to sell on eBay (do a search for your product using the 'completed items' option to see what your item is selling for – if at all). Research companies, products, and costs completely before you commit any money – and never send cash!

As fast as people become aware of and stop falling for one type of scheme, it seems that there is a handful more to replace it. Plus, the websites offering the schemes get more and more convincing – they look professional and hi-tech, show you testimonials, 'checks' with outrageous amounts they have supposedly earned, or they offer guarantees of your money back that, if you research the company, others will say were not honored.

The newest type of scam seems to be one offering you a chance to get in on the 'bottom floor' of a new 'green products' company. In some offers, they even tout themselves as a 'Christian Company,' hoping to gain some of your confidence with such a claim. Unfortunately, a few searches online prove that this company is just a fraudulent attempt to get your credit card info again so they can charge you a monthly fee after the initial 'sign-up.'

So how can you stay up-to-date enough in order to avoid schemes? Information is your best defense. There are a couple of general rules about any kind of make-money-on-the-internet ideas. First, if they are willing to sell the idea to you, it's probably not worth much or they would rather keep it to themselves. Second, as we've all been told before, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is. And third, legitimate companies will have corporate information available such as annual reports, will be in good standing with the Better Business Bureau, and will not pop up with all kinds of complaints when you search for information about them online.

You can do a revealing search on any company by typing the name of the product and then the word 'scam' or 'fraud' after it in an internet search. If you're curious, try typing 'google cash scam' in a search engine box and see what comes up. It's not pleasant to think about how many people have already been fooled, but at least you know that you won't be one of them.

For serious online or work-at-home jobs, knowing these types of schemes will help you to eliminate some of the chaff and help you identify the wheat more quickly. The good news is that there are jobs you can do from home. In some cases, you will find them online. But in other cases, you

won't. You will need to job hunt for these types of positions the same way you would for other, traditional jobs.

One very popular way to work at home is to do freelance work. If you have computer, web design, graphic design, writing, translation, or other technical skills, you may be able to find clients online. There are sites dedicated to connecting freelancers with clients, although they do charge a fee for the service. Examples include elance.com and guru.com, but there are others.

The best sites provide you with some protection in working with a client you never see, such as having the customer put payment in escrow. This protects the customer too, since the funds won't be released until the job is complete.

However, you will have to establish a 'name' for yourself, and you will be competing with others trying to do the same. So unless you have references from freelance jobs you've done offline, you will probably need to price your services rather low to start, and increase your prices as your reputation grows.

Another online work-from-home opportunity is working as a medical transcriptionist or medical billing coder. They are related jobs, but not the same. The transcriptionist takes the doctor's notes on a patient and enters them into the patient's electronic record. It requires some knowledge of medical terminology and abbreviations. Medical billing specialists or billing coders are actually preparing information on a patient's treatment to be sent to the patient's insurance company for processing and payment.

You can find a number of jobsites online for this kind of work, though the more reputable, better paying companies will require that you have some training or certification before they will hire you. If you are interested in pursuing this kind of work, look at your nearest technical college or continuing education program to see if they offer the training.

If you find training for this kind of work online, ask the training company for information on job placements their students have reported. You should also ask the company you want to work for if they consider online training valid for their requirements.

Other work-at-home jobs include working for a call center. In this type of job you are at home, taking calls for a company as if you were sitting in a call center with a bunch of other employees doing the same thing. You might take customer service calls, sales calls, or catalog order calls, for example.

The company will require that you have certain equipment and are available a certain number of hours a week, but it can be a good way to earn some additional income. One word of warning – some of these sites may be looking for adult phone conversations, so just be certain you understand what you are signing up for before you get started.

Are you good at being organized and productive? Then you might be able to get a job as a virtual assistant. In these jobs, you perform work for a client who has a need for a specific type of help. It could be research, data entry, paperwork processing, or any number of things, and it could change from week to week.

If you do a good job for a client, chances are you will be requested again. However, the pay is not necessarily very good for these jobs. This is because there is significant competition from overseas companies who can charge less because their labor costs are lower. But if you think you would enjoy this type of work, do some research to see what they can offer you.

Here is a list of sites you can visit for online and work-at-home job listings. Remember, however, that you need to do your research on ANY job listing you find here. While some of them are bound to be legitimate, I can't guarantee that all of them are. In fact, most of the sites will say the same thing in a type of disclaimer. Some of the sites have a search option for jobs, while other sites provide lists of links to possible job leads. When you do begin a search, you may need to enter keywords such as 'work at home' or 'telecommute' in order to find the right listings.

- www.jobsearch.com
- www.appliedmedicalservices.com
- www.sohojobs.org
- www.workathomesuccess.com
- www.convergys.com
- www.craigslist.com
- www.flexjobs.com
- www.creativeworkathome.com

- www.genexservices.com
- www.momcorps.com
- www.ratracerebellion.com
- www.sun oasisjobs.jobamatic.com

You can also try the major job search engines such as Monster.com, Careerbuilder.com, or hotjobs.yahoo.com. There are definitely some fraudulent ads on these sites, however. Most of them will be flagged by the site as a 'non-traditional' type of job, warning you that you might need to make an investment of some kind and that the site doesn't guarantee that it is a legitimate opportunity.

Chapter Four:

Writing the Script for the Next Phase of Your Life

Don't simply retire from something; have something to retire to.

~Harry Emerson Fosdick

For what is probably the first time in your adult life, you have reached a chapter that allows you incredible freedom. You have met the milestones and expectations of a person who may have raised a family, who has had a career, or both. Now you have reached the point when the way your day is run is no longer dictated by a time clock or by rules or requirements set by other people.

Now is your chance to write your own script, to have your time sculpted into the type of experiences that you have always longed to have. But sometimes, old habits can be difficult for us to break. Even though you are now in charge of how you run your days, you may find that you are still automatically following some of the rules that have become a habit for you. So much so that you might no longer even realize that they were self-imposed rules to begin with, and that you could actually choose to do something differently.

Since these rules are often so ingrained in us, you might not be able to think of any examples in your own life right away. It might be easier to think about it for a friend or family member that you know well. Ask yourself the questions below about that person first, to start your brainstorming. Then start to examine them for yourself.

Remember the notebook that was suggested in the first chapter? You might want to start carrying it with you for a few days or even a few weeks after you've read this chapter. Chances are that you will see more and more examples of these 'rules' in your life once you are actually looking for them. Some of these would apply only to men, some only to women, so just answer the ones that are appropriate for you.

- What time do you get up in the morning? What time do you go to bed? Do you ever vary from these times? What are some examples of when you would? How do you feel when you vary from them?
- What do you eat for breakfast? Is it the same thing every morning? Is there a pattern, like that you eat cereal every morning except Sunday, when you have an omelet? What about lunch and dinner?
- What foods do you not allow yourself to have? Why? What would happen if you ate some of it?
- What type of music do you listen to? Where do you listen to it? Do you ever go to concerts or live performances? Do you ever allow someone else to introduce you to a new performer? Why or why not?
- Do you ever take any classes to learn a new skill? Why or why not?
- Do you ever host a gathering at your house? Why or why not?
- What kinds of people are you friends with? What would happen if you branched out to new people?
- Do you attend any form of religious organization? What about social or political organizations? What would it take for you to join an organization?
- What kind of clothes do you wear? Do you ever try any new looks? Why or why not?
- For women, what colors do you wear? Do you ever try a new color, even in an accessory or pair of shoes? If no, why not? What about jewelry? Do you stick with one particular metal (gold or silver), or one style? Why not try some fun, chunky, or unusual pieces?
- For men, do you ever try a different style of facial hair or a different hair cut? Why or why not?
- Do you ever allow yourself to indulge in pampering, like getting a massage, a manicure, or highlights in your hair?

This next set of questions is a bit different. It requires you to fill in the blank with an answer or answers. Take out a sheet of paper and write down

as many answers as you can think of. Don't censor yourself; let the words flow. And don't worry if nothing comes to you at first; you can always come back to the exercise at another point and see what other answers arise.

You can feel free to change the statement to make it fit something that you think of that is similar to any of these. The point is not to get the answers that fit these statements perfectly; the point is just to make you think.

1. I can't start my day without _____.
2. I have to make sure that _____ is/are done before I leave the house for the day.
3. I am not a good _____.
4. I have always wanted to learn to _____.
5. A project that I've been thinking about for a long time is _____
_____.
6. If money were no object, I would _____
_____.
7. A person I have lost touch with but would like to see again is _____
_____.
8. I have never visited _____.
9. I have always been too embarrassed to _____.
10. I wish that I knew how to _____
_____.
11. I never let myself _____
_____.
12. I would love to indulge myself in _____

- _____.
13. I've always wondered why I haven't _____.
- _____.
14. If I could go back in time, I would have been a _____.
15. For me, dancing is _____.
16. I could never _____ by myself.
17. I wish I could _____.
18. I remember how much I enjoyed _____
- _____ when I was younger.
19. If I could just _____, I
would be happier.
20. I'm very good at _____.

Here's one more exercise for you to try. This chapter title says that you can write the script for the next chapter of your life. A good script has great character descriptions so that when the movie is made, the actor and director have a picture of the person they are creating on the screen. People remember great characters long after the movie has faded to black.

So take a few moments to write a description of the 'character' that you play in life – the person that you are as you are facing retirement. Be thorough, and remember that you are writing this from the point of view of what we would see, and how we would know what kind of character you are.

Are you the 'nice, quiet' one? Were you always the peacemaker in your family? Are you the shy reserved one at a party, nervously sipping a drink in the corner, or are you the life of the party, telling the stories that have the whole room laughing?

To help you do this, try to picture yourself and how you would react in a few different situations, such as:

- A party where you are the guest of honor

- Having an unexpected week off to do as you choose
- A conflict between yourself and your boss or coworker
- Witnessing an argument between one of your parents and one of your siblings (or between two other people you love and are connected to)
- At the grocery store when someone cuts in front of you in line
- A beggar asking you for change on the street
- Running into an old flame unexpectedly
- A conflict between you and your boss
- What you would do if you won \$10,000

These are just suggestions – they may spawn other thoughts or situations and that's perfectly fine. You just want to get an idea of how you operate in the world and with other people.

Remember to include a physical description of your 'character':

- Your basic physical description
- How you move – are you clumsy? Smooth? Slow or fast? Direct and self-confident or shuffling and looking down?
- The description of an outfit you're likely to wear on a date (with your spouse if you're married, or with someone new if you're single)
- The description of what you'd wear to the hardware store
- Any noticeable features about you – like that you always wear a certain watch, a special bracelet, etc.
- What your physical appearance says to the world – does it say 'notice me,' 'talk to me,' 'leave me alone,' 'I'm tired' or any other message?

Another feature of a great script is that the characters in a script always go through some kind of change. In the film industry, this is referred

to as the 'character arc.' The character starts in one place and by the end of the film, is in another place – either they have a different point of view, have proven something to themselves or someone else, or have overcome some kind of obstacle. Think about some of your favorite films – the great ones have a character whose story we fall in love with.

So now think about your own character arc for the retirement part of your life. We've done several exercises now that are designed to have you examine yourself, the rules you live your life by, and the things that you might still want for yourself.

In looking back at these exercises, where would you like your character to be at the end of your story?

To help you with this, imagine that you have retired, and that your retirement is going the way that you want it to – you are doing the things you said you wanted to do when you thought about how it would be. How would your character's description change? Would you:

- Be calmer or more agitated?
- Have a different reaction to conflict? Where would your conflicts be if not at work?
- Be more or less willing to give to others?
- Enjoy parties and socializing more? Why or why not?
- Be at home more or out in the world more?
- Be more or less active?

How would your physical description change in your character's story? Would you be giving off a different 'message' to others through your physical appearance? Obviously we can't control every aspect of our physical health, but there are some things we can make an effort to control.

For example, if you smoke and you don't want your character to be on oxygen in your later description, then you would do well to stop smoking now. If you are currently overweight, have high cholesterol, high blood pressure or diabetes and you don't want to be sicker in your later character description, then taking on a sensible, doctor-approved weight loss and/or exercise program would help to make sure you can remain 'in character.'

The purpose of these exercises is to see that you do have a say in how your retirement will go. If you have seen rules that you have placed on yourself that you no longer need or want, try 'breaking' them slowly. Go buy that pair of red boots or try that new recipe for breakfast. Rent a snazzy car for the weekend and see what it feels like just to drive around in a different vehicle. Stay up late watching movies or late night TV just to see what's on. Experiment with the freedom you have to either create new rules or eliminate them.

Now look at the questions that had you fill in the blanks about what you want and what's important to you. And consider your 'character' and the changes you said you would like to see. As you continue to read this book, we will be building upon your picture of what you'd like to have happen in retirement. But on top of that, we'll be working on some habits and structures that can help you to achieve those goals.

Chapter Five:

Tools for Reinventing Your Life

Retire from work, but not from life.

~M.K. Soni

In Chapter Four we talked about the fact that you are in charge of writing your own 'script' for your life. What we'll do next is to explain to you some tools to help you get there. You actually already put one of the best tools for achieving goals into use – visualization. You imagined what your character would be like after retirement, and how you would spend your time. Now we'll look at some concrete tools to help you manage your day in way that will help to turn that visualization into reality.

If you want to spend your time on turning your goals into reality, then you need to first realize where your time is currently going. How many times a week do you think to yourself, 'I would really like to do X if I could just find the time?' The truth is that the majority of us have more time than we realize; we are just not necessarily spending it wisely.

Tracking Your Time

The best way to recognize where you are losing time is to track how you spend it. Chances are, you will be surprised at the time you spend in a day that is not helping you move towards your goals. Recognizing your habits can help you learn how to be more effective with the choices you make each day.

On the following two pages is a chart that you can use to learn how you spend your time and whether or not it is helping you achieve your goals, followed by an example of a filled-in chart. I recommend that you use it to track your time for at least a week. Two or three weeks would be better, since not all of our weeks necessarily look the same. You can create your own version of the form or use a calendar that you already use for keeping track of your appointments – whatever works for you.

Date: _____

Goals for Today:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Time	Activity	Planned?	Goal Related?

Time	Activity	Planned?	Goal Related?

NOTES:

EXAMPLE

Date: May 20

Goals for Today:

1. Register for the 'New Entrepreneurs' class at local college
2. Create outline for next chapter of my memoir
3. Clean the house
4. Call the girls
- 5.

Time	Activity	Planned?	Goal Related?
7am – 8:30am	Had breakfast, read the paper, got dressed	Y	N
8:30am-10:00am	Watched the news	N	N
10am – 12pm	Worked on outline	Y	Y – 2
12-1	Talked to sister about that trip in 1987, caught up	N	Y – 2
1 – 2	Ate lunch, cleaned kitchen	Y	Y - 3

You'll notice the first area to fill in, besides the date, is your list of goals for the day. These are goals that will probably related to some larger, overall goals. For example, in our sample form, registering for the new entrepreneurs' class is probably related to another goal, such as starting a business. Or, cleaning the house might be related to a broader goal of making your home a place where you would feel comfortable entertaining people.

Your list of long-term goals can be kept on a sheet of paper at the beginning of your notebook. That way if you are ever stumped for what your goals should be for a day, you can flip to your goals sheet for ideas. Being in action every day around the goals you have for yourself makes you feel empowered. As you begin to see your goals get closer or even get crossed off of your list, you will gain more confidence in yourself and what you can accomplish in your retirement. You may be surprised at what you can achieve when you set this kind of structure in place.

Before we go over the chart in its entirety, let's talk about how to set effective goals.

SMART Goals

The best types of goals to set are SMART goals:

- **S is for Specific** – there are parameters around the goal. You know exactly what it is that you need to accomplish.

In the goals listed on the example form, which ones are specific? Which are not?

- **M is for Measurable** – you can tell whether or not the goal has been accomplished by this aspect.

'Exercise' would not be a measurable goal. How long are you going to exercise? How many days a week? At what intensity? 'Walk for 20 minutes at brisk pace three times per week' is measurable. You either walked 20 minutes or you didn't. You either strolled or you walked briskly. You either did it three days or you didn't. It's very easy to determine if you met this goal.

In our example, which goal is not measurable?

- **A is for Attainable** – Is it something that you have the skills to do now, or do you need to break it into steps?

'Learn Spanish' would certainly not be an attainable goal for today. But 'Study Spanish book for 1 hour' would be. It's specific because you're studying a certain book, and it's measurable because you've said you'll do it for one hour. You'll know at the end of the day whether you did it or not. It's also attainable because you have the ability to study for one hour, whereas 12 hours would probably not be attainable.

- **R is for Realistic** – As much as we may like to do it, there are some goals that are just not realistic given our physical health, our financial health, or the resources that we have available to us.

For instance, if you are 55 years old, the goal of becoming a professional football player is not realistic. But that doesn't mean you couldn't set a realistic goal related to football, if that's your passion. You could decide to volunteer to coach a local youth team, or start collecting memorabilia from your favorite pro team. Or even decide that you're going to follow your favorite team for away games!

Setting unrealistic goals is the fastest way to frustrate yourself. But setting easy, non-challenging goals could also get boring very quickly. Try to find a happy medium – a goal that moves you towards your larger, overall goals for your retirement, but that doesn't make getting there seem like going back to work full-time would be the better choice!

- **T is for Timely** – you've satisfied this criterion when you have set a time limit for your goal.

So, 'lose 10 pounds' might be specific, measurable, attainable and realistic for you, but if you don't set a time limit around your goal, you may never complete it. 'Lose 10 pounds by June 1' meets all the criteria, as long as you have allowed a realistic amount of time to do so, and as long as you actually have 10 pounds to lose.

If we were to rewrite the goals on our example form, how could we improve them to make them SMART goals? How about this:

1. Register for the "New Entrepreneurs" class that starts June 4
2. Write outline for chapter in memoir on the 1987 trip to Colorado; chapter will be at least 10 pages.
3. Clean the house is not specific, measurable, or timely. However, we will assume that the timeline it should be done in is today since it is written on today's form.

What about 'clean the kitchen, the living room, and the master bath'? Yes, that goal is SMART, assuming you are physically able to complete the tasks.

Another wonderful thing about SMART goals is that they lend themselves well to delegation. If you tell your spouse or child to 'clean the house,' you can be surprised by the results you get. But if you tell them to 'unload & reload the dishwasher, clean the counter tops, sweep & mop the floors,' then you are much more likely to avoid a misunderstanding and get the results that you wanted.

4. Is 'Call the girls' a SMART goal? Well, it depends. If the intent is just to chat, and you know who the girls are off the top of your head, then the goal is fine unless you want to set a limit on the amount of time that you speak to them.

But if there are a number of 'girls' to call, and if you have specific things you need to discuss with each of them, or if you know that they are available only during certain times of the day, then you would need to add those details to the goal in order to make it SMART.

Using the Chart

When you fill in the chart, you'll see four columns to complete. The first is the time that you took to do the task. You should put the actual times that you started and stopped, not the number of minutes it took. You can always determine the minutes from the start and stop times, but you can't necessarily determine the start and stop times just by writing down the minutes that it took you.

In the next column, you'll see 'activity.' Here you write a brief description of what you did. It can be simple, like 'ate breakfast,' or if you

are working on trying new foods as one of the 'rules' you are breaking from our earlier discussions, then you would want to describe what you ate.

You can certainly clump certain things together if you like. For example, 'watched TV, did crossword puzzles' can be combined because they are both entertainment activities that probably weren't on your goal list.

The next column asks if the activity was planned for the day. If it was, then put a check or a yes. If it wasn't, then put an x or a no. This column tells you how much of what you are doing you actually planned to do that day.

Once you've completed this column over the week or more, you may begin to see a pattern emerge. It might show you that you tend to be reactive rather than proactive. In other words, you may tend to change your plans based on what others ask of you, or because you tend to get caught up in the television or that unexpected phone call from a friend.

However, it will also show you what activities are currently more important to you than others. It's not always realistic to stick to your list without budging. Opportunities do come up, after all, and this is your time to do as you wish! This tool just educates you about where you are actually using time that you might not realize you are using it. Once you are informed, you might decide you don't want to use your time that way anymore.

The final column asks whether or not the activity was related to your goal. An activity can be planned and yet not be moving you towards your goal, and that's perfectly fine. Life goes on even in retirement, and some appointments, activities, or commitments aren't always going to be related to our personal goals.

But if you find that these cases are frequent, or that your planned activities are preventing you from spending time on achieving your goals, you'll want to ask yourself why this is happening. Perhaps you're fine with the pace you're taking towards your goal, and that you're enjoying these other things along the way. Or perhaps you need to make some requests of others to help you with some of your responsibilities so that you can focus more time on your goals. Maybe you need to make a change in your own home, like having the cable turned off so that you're not distracted from your goals by tempting but unproductive television.

What about a different situation. Let's say that you have all sorts of goal related activities, but none of them were planned. What does that tell

you? Are you not good at identifying what goal activities you need to complete a goal? Are you making progress towards your goals, but in a kind of haphazard manner? Would you like to be able to reach them more steadily?

If that's the case, or even if you'd just like more practice on how to break a goal down into its individual parts that you can work on from day to day, try the following exercise.

- Get a calendar that extends out in the future to the goal you have in mind
- Figure out the number of weeks you have left between today and the day you want to complete your goal
- Then, working backwards from the goal date to today, figure out what needs to be completed and by when.
- Plot these steps out on the calendar, being careful to watch for interdependencies. (A step that can't be done until another step is completed)
- Always allow a little bit of 'wiggle room' in your dates in case of unforeseen emergencies or changes.

Planning backwards from the 'finish line' will help make sure you don't miss any important steps along the way. And it will help you to stay on target for completing your goal by your intended date.

Here's a simple example for how this could work. Let's say that you are planning a trip to Italy to take an authentic cooking course, and you want to throw a dinner party for your friends with some of the recipes that you learned. Because you know that the summer is very busy for everyone, you want to get the invitations to the dinner party out earlier than you normally would. Let's say the trip is scheduled June 17th – 24th, and you will have the party on June 27. Today is April 15th. How would you set up your calendar to accomplish these goals?

Week	Possible Daily Goals
April 15 – 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for Passport renewal • Purchase ticket • Register for intensive Italian course
April 22 – 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick out invitations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine guest list • Determine date and time of party
April 29 - May 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address and mail invitations • Create RSVP list • Start Italian course
May 6 – May 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop for travel needs • Continue Italian course
May 13 – May 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with cell phone company on how to use phone overseas • Continue Italian course
May 20 – May 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for housesitter / petsitter • Last week of Italian course
May 27 - June 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice Italian for 1 hour each day • Shop for any special clothes
June 3 – June 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm itinerary & send to family • Stop mail service • Request drive-bys from police
June 10 – June 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy all documents for safety • Determine laundry to do • Do laundry • Get hair done • Pack suitcases
Upon Return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm RSVPs, check allergies of guests • Finalize menu

Which of the steps, if any, would have been on your calendar? Where there any steps that you wouldn't necessarily have thought of doing? Are there any steps missing from this calendar that should be there?

What about interdependent steps? One obvious one is that you can't buy a ticket until you know the dates of the course. But also upon return, out of consideration for your guests you only finalize the menu after being certain that the people who have RSVP'd don't have any allergies.

Again, this is a simple example. A goal such as 'starting my own training company' would be much more complex, with many more interdependencies. In some cases, you might even want to try working on your computer skills, as we discussed in Chapter Three, so that you can take advantage of software that can help you keep track of your goals and projects.

After some time, you may decide that you need a different kind of structure to help you move towards your goals. Don't feel tied to the format provided here. You will find out what works for you by experimenting with different ideas until you find the one that fits best. Some days your list of goals will be entirely different from the day before. This is a good thing – it means that you completed all of your goals on the day before. Or, you

simply may not achieve a goal on one day, and then it will get carried to the next day.

Time Change?

Once you've completed at least a week of your time-tracking information, you'll have some valuable clues about how you spend your time. Look back over the week or weeks and notice where you have some time that you could reallocate to your goals.

Do you watch a lot of TV or movies? Do you spend too much time on the phone? Perhaps the words 'too much' are the wrong phrase, because again, your time is your own. But you might be spending time on things that don't move you towards goals and that you could easily see yourself turning towards more productive pursuits. Start slowly – changing old habits, even if they are ones that you want to change, can be very difficult.

Are there things about the way you structure your time that might be preventing you from getting more activity done towards your goals? For example, are you waking up and going to bed at the times you always have, or are you doing it at the time that is now best for your goals?

If you have always woken up at 6am and gone to bed at 10pm, but you find that you can write your memoir, or get your exercise videos done more easily once the house is empty, why not sleep in late? Or if you find you can do your reading or your research best once everyone has gone to sleep, why not stay up later? Without a work day to structure your time, you are free to structure it however it best suits you, your family, and your goals.

Time Saving with Technology

In addition to the program management type of software mentioned above, there are all kinds of technologies that can help you to save time – and the industry is continually coming out with new ones. If you're not entirely comfortable with new technology, you're not alone. It is changing at a rapid pace that can make it difficult for anyone to keep up for very long.

But some technologies may be worth investigating because they make life easier and can save you time for doing what you want to do. Here are some possible examples:

- A cellular phone – it can save time in planning with others, changing plans, getting needed information, and can assist you in an emergency. Can also keep your calendar, send you alerts so you don't forget appointments, and keep your addresses and phone numbers all within easy reach.
- A Geo-Positioning System (GPS) device – these digital maps can help you save time by plotting the best routes for you to drive, notifying you of any traffic blocks and helping to keep you from getting lost. Many of them now speak out loud to you, giving you turn by turn instructions. Some cellular phones now offer this function as well.
- Portable internet devices – can save time when you need information and don't want to have to search for a phonebook, or can let you keep in touch with your family when traveling. Most cellular phones now can provide this function.
- Money management software – can save time by keeping track of your finances, printing out 'checks' for you, and in combination with online banking programs (if your bank offers it), can allow you to pay your bills all with just a few clicks of the mouse.
- Email – saves time in the sense that you can share information with as many people as you want to all at one time. Allows you to be 'concise' with an email rather than getting on the phone with people who might want to talk for longer than you had really intended. (If Chapter Three didn't convince you to get email, maybe this will!)

Don't feel intimidated by technology – like anything else, it just takes a little time to learn. If you have a teenager in your life, ask them for help, since it's likely they don't remember a time before the internet. Or, you can sign up for a class on the basics. For software applications, the company's website may have some training materials available for free as well.

Chapter Six:

Finding Your Passion

Retirement has been a discovery of beauty for me. I never had the time before to notice the beauty of my grandkids, my wife, the tree outside my very own front door. And, the beauty of time itself.

~Hartman Jule

There is nothing more rewarding in your working life than working at something that you love to do. Even if you don't get paid, your passion is something that you could see yourself doing day in, day out.

Passions inspire us, they give us energy and they make us feel more alive. Retirement is the time in life when you are likely to be most free to pursue what you are passionate about. Particularly if you do not need to worry about a source of income, then finding what you are truly passionate about is the greatest gift that you can give yourself.

But do you know what you are passionate about? For many of us, we may have gotten so used to working at something we did just to pay the bills that we can no longer really sense what we are passionate about. Or, it could be that what you are passionate about has changed. You might once have loved a hobby like gardening, but maybe now you'd rather leave the yard care to someone else. Or maybe you used to enjoy traveling internationally but now you'd rather travel to see your grandchildren.

As you grow and change as a person, your passions may change as well. If you find that you attempt to immerse yourself in something that you once loved but you find you don't enjoy it as much anymore, don't worry. This just means that you have the excitement of trying new things ahead of you. You'll know when you find something you're passionate about again. It will be the thing you want to do more than anything else and that you look forward to when you are doing something else.

One possible way to get inspired is to travel. Exposing yourself to new locations, scenery, sounds, smells, and experiences will naturally open your mind to different possibilities for your life. You may go to a restaurant in a

nearby town and think to yourself, 'I wonder if they would let me open a franchise in my city?'

Or, you could be traveling to a foreign country, talking to people whose lives are different than yours, and realize that you want to live there for a period of time. You want to explore their culture more, and see what it's like to be outside of America for an extended period of time.

Traveling internationally is a fantastic way to see different possibilities for new ways of living. Whether it's the siestas of Spain or the closeness of families in Italy, you may pick up hints of things you'd like to add to your own life back home.

Of course, you don't have to leave home to get inspired. A good brainstorming session can get your creative juices flowing and get you excited about a number of different possibilities. What could you be passionate about? There may be something you've never thought of before that would just delight you.

To help you do some brainstorming, here are some topics to consider:

- Athletics and games: Aerobics, archery, badminton, baseball, basketball, biking, board games, card games, croquet, dancing, diving, gambling, hockey, jogging, kayaking, lacrosse, mountain climbing, rowing, racquetball, sailing, soccer, shooting, swimming, Pilates, tennis, video games, walking, weight lifting, yoga...etc.
- Skills: acting, carpentry, cooking, dancing, drafting, electrician, fashion design, foreign languages, interior design, massage therapy musical instrument, notary, physical training, singing, typing, writing...etc.
- Volunteering: with a nonprofit, at your church, as a pollster at the local board of elections, as an aide at a local hospital, as a mentor or tutor for children, as a foster parent, at a local library, at a local theater, museum, or art gallery (often with the benefit of seeing performances or exhibits free of charge), doing taxes for those who need help, in foreign countries helping the poor, digging on archaeological sites or helping to care for endangered animals (see the section on volunteering on page 72 for more suggestions), etc.

If none of these rang any bells for you, try this exercise to see if you can come up with your own suggestions.

Take a piece of paper and create three columns. On the left side, the heading should be 'things I love.' In the middle column, the heading should be 'things I know or know how to do well.' The third column should be 'things I value.'

Start with the first column. Now, don't hold back as you make this list. Things you love can include people, foods, hobbies, certain arts or sports – whatever you want. It can be repetitive, nonsensical – just let it flow. A list of things you love might look like this:

- Children
- Books
- Writing
- Reading
- Theater
- Movies
- Literature
- Flowers
- Volunteering
- Swimming
- Soccer
- Dogs
- Travel
- England
- Tea
- Painting
- Museums

Now, in the middle column, you make the list of things you know well or you know how to do well. Again, don't censor yourself. By letting your mind go, you're tapping into your subconscious, letting your inner voice tell you what to say. Here's an example list for what you do well. Don't worry if there are repeats from things you listed in the first column. In fact, be grateful if there are – it's a gift to be good at something you love doing.

- Writing
- Singing
- Dancing
- Drawing
- Public Speaking
- Organizing things
- Listening to others
- Tutoring
- Speaking Spanish

- Teaching
- Problem Solving
- Camping
- Jewelry making
- Website design
- Landscaping

Finally, in the right hand column, make a list of things you value. These could be items, concepts, people – whatever comes to mind when you think of the topic. Here’s a sample list:

- Freedom
- Diversity
- My family
- Integrity
- Generosity
- Independence
- Opportunity
- Education
- My faith
- Kindness
- Hard work
- My mind
- My health

Now here’s the reason for making the lists. Take a pencil and a separate sheet of paper. From the three lists, look for combinations of things that make you think of possible passions for you. You don’t have to use any particular number of items from any column. Just keep going with this exercise until you have identified some possibilities.

Examples from these lists:

- Children, tutoring, and education - would tutoring children be something you could be passionate about? What about teaching children to speak Spanish?
- Listening to others, writing and my family – could you be passionate about documenting the history of your family? What stories do your parents and other relatives have to tell that you would hate to lose?

- Traveling and literature – What about retracing the steps of some of your favorite authors? Where they lived, what they wrote about. Would you like to see the lands they described?
- Flowers, organizing things and generosity – taking a flower arranging class and making arrangements as gifts? Opening a flower shop? How about growing an incredible cut flower garden? Then you could share the flowers with people in nursing homes or make them into arrangements to decorate your church.

The key to this exercise is to let yourself brainstorm. You will know when you have hit upon a combination that could be a passion for you. You'll suddenly start thinking about all the possibilities around that combination. You might stop making your list of combinations and instead start sketching out plans for making something happen around your idea.

If you don't see any combinations, ask someone to go over the exercise with you. It may be that you don't have enough on your lists to let your mind make plausible connections. Maybe your spouse, friend, or sibling can help you think of other things for your lists and then help you think of combinations.

Like the other exercises in this book, your answers are likely to develop over time. Don't be surprised if you find yourself coming up with new items for your lists or new combinations from them as you go through the next few days. Just keep your mind open and you'll get there.

Volunteering

There is nothing as rewarding as knowing that you are making a difference for others. Sure, you can make donations of cash or other goods to an organization, but many organizations really need the assistance of some willing helping hands. And the good news is that volunteering is free.

What do you picture when you think of volunteering? Do you picture serving in soup kitchens or selling candy bars to raise funds? Serving a role in your church or at your grandchild's school? While all of these are certainly worthwhile means of helping others, you are not limited to activities like these. You can find volunteer opportunities to meet any interest you might have, and some that you might not yet have realized that you have.

There is one way to volunteer that lets you have a hand in actually steering the future of an organization. You can volunteer to serve on an organization's board of directors. Your first reaction might be, 'but I don't have any money!' The fact is that boards need two main types of volunteers: those who have money and connections to other people with money, and those who have time and energy. If you're willing to work, you're what a lot of boards need.

This is particularly true if you have a skill that non-profit organizations need. Many non-profits just don't have the money to hire people for every position they might need, so they depend on their volunteers and board to help fill the gaps.

For example, were you an accountant or financial planner in your professional career? Then you could be an excellent Treasurer for an organization. Were you a sales person? Well, why not start 'selling' your favorite organization's mission? You could be an incredible fundraiser for an organization if you learn to do with the organization's message what you used to do with your company's products. Selling a mission means that you are able to effectively communicate to others how much their support is needed. Or, if you're good as a leader or cheerleader, consider seeing if you could volunteer to help get other volunteers involved.

You can actually register with an organization that connects people with needed skills and nonprofits that need them. Executive Service Corps Affiliate Network (ESCAN) is a network of non-profit consultants and consulting groups that are able to make professional expertise available to nonprofits for minimal cost. If you would like to see how you can get involved, visit www.escus.org. Senior Corps is a similar organization that connects people over 55 with different volunteer opportunities. Visit the website at www.seniorcorps.org.

One organization that you can volunteer for is also one designed to help retired people – the American Association of Retired People (AARP). Volunteer opportunities with the organization include:

- Participating in the annual Day of Service, where you sign up to volunteer for the day at a local organization
- Benefits Outreach Program – these volunteers help connect impoverished members of their community to available resources and programs that can help them pay for medicine, groceries, and more.

- Driver Safety Program – through this program you can learn how to train older drivers to help them learn to drive more safely. The class addresses how aging can affect your driving and teaches older drivers how to compensate for these changes.
- Money Management Program – many older people may not know how to manage their finances. Imagine an elderly woman who is newly widowed and has never paid her household's bills. She needs help learning how to manage her money and might not have anyone she can turn to. You can volunteer to help older people in these situations so that they can avoid financial problems.
- Tax Aide – in a similar type of program, you can volunteer to help others prepare their tax returns. You'll particularly be helping people who are low and moderate earners.

There are other volunteer opportunities through AARP, such as volunteering to teach young children through community programs or even volunteering to run AARP's local and community efforts. Visit www.aarp.org for more information on these and other opportunities.

Below is a list of some other volunteer opportunities, some of which are designed for seniors in particular. If you would like to meet some new friends (or potential dates, if you're single), then these might be excellent ways to meet people who you know you already have things in common with.

- Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement (www.easi.org) – this organization organizes senior citizens to participate in programs that either protect or improve the environment. Projects you can join in on might help to clean local parks, monitor local pollution levels, or increase energy conservation efforts in your community.
- Experience Corps (www.experiencecorps.org) – an organization that offers you the chance to work with at-risk or disadvantage young people in the area. You tutor them, help them learn to read, or even learn good study skills. There aren't chapters available everywhere, but you could consider starting one. See the website for more information.
- Generations United (www.gu.org) – this organization focuses on programs that bring the elderly and youth together to help each other.

- Oasis (www.oasisnet.org) – volunteers here also help children and youth learn to read or they tutor the children in other subjects.

Are you more interested in opportunities to volunteer internationally? Then consider one of these organizations:

- Peace Corps (www.peacecorps.gov) – you may think of this as a young person's volunteer opportunity, but actually that's not the case. About 7% of their volunteers are those who are 50 years old or older. Of course, you will need to be able to pass a physical exam since many posts are in locations which are physically challenging or might not have immediate access to health care.
- Earthwatch Institute (www.earthwatch.org) – if you volunteer with this organization, you'll be sent to help monitor the environment's conditions in different areas of the world. If you have a natural science background or if you are an experienced researcher, this may be a great match for you.
- Global Citizens Network (www.globalcitizens.org) – here you'll get the chance to live in a developing community and experience the culture first hand. You'll spend up to three weeks working and living with a local family, learning what it's like to walk in their shoes. Once you have volunteered on a trip, you can also continue volunteering back home by helping to promote the programs.
- Global Volunteers (www.globalvolunteers.org) – if you want a longer overseas experience, consider this organization. Volunteers live and work in international communities for up to 43 weeks at a time. You could do anything from helping to improve sanitation measures to teaching English.
- Globe Aware (www.globeaware.org) – here, you learn about a community in another country without working to change it. Programs are designed to promote cultural awareness while providing much needed assistance.
- LiFeline (www.rtec.strayduck.com/index.html) – provides working vacations in Belize where you can help with large cat research and rehabilitation projects.
- Orphanage Outreach (www.orphanage-outreach.org) – focuses on assisting orphaned and poor children in the Dominican Republic.

There is another unique volunteer opportunity that retirees are perfect for – serving as a foster parent. There are hundreds of thousands of children in the foster care system in the United States. They have been removed from their parents' homes because they were not being properly cared for, and they need loving, caring homes while the court and social workers help their parents learn how to do a better job of raising their children.

Of course, some foster children will not ever be reunited with their parents because of the depth of the parents' problems. For these children, long-term foster care is needed until adoptive homes can be found for them. In these cases, you may serve as the children's long-term caregivers, knowing that you are the reason that they will have a chance to grow into functional adults.

Foster care parents can decide what kind of children they are willing to accept as foster children. You can indicate the age, sex, and level of behavior or medical problems you can handle in a child. And in return, you will receive training, support, and a financial stipend for serving as a foster parent. The stipend is not meant to be viewed as income, but instead to compensate foster parents for any costs they incur while taking care of the children.

Fostering is not for the faint of heart. You may fall in love with a child, only to have her removed from your home and sent back to her parents. Or you may have children placed in your home who have suffered from severe abuse or neglect. But there is always assistance available from the child's case worker, and you are never forced to continue caring for a child that you feel is too much to handle. The main thing to remember is how vital a role you would be playing in helping the children through an incredibly difficult situation.

If you'd prefer to volunteer in the business world, there are certainly opportunities to do so. You may be able to teach classes for a local professional association that helps new businesses get started. Or, many former business professionals may enjoy volunteering to help small businesses through their growth stages by working with the Small Business Administration and SCORE (www.score.org).

Over 10,000 people volunteer through SCORE in order to provide the kind of advice to small business owners that they need but might not be able to afford. If you live near an SBA office, you could possibly teach classes there or meet with small business owners for one-on-one mentoring sessions. Or if there isn't an SBA office near you, see if you can volunteer to

answer emails that are sent to the organization. Visit the website to find out more about volunteer options.

Another company you can work with if you have an experience in the medical field is through Volunteers in Medicine. This organization provides clinics in areas where there are not sufficient medical resources to serve the community or to people who do not have access to medical care because they are indigent or have no health insurance.

If you were a doctor, nurse, pharmacist, dentist, medical assistant or other medical or health care professional, you may be incredibly needed. Check the organization's website at www.vimi.org to see what volunteer opportunities are available at one of the organization's clinics near you.

Chapter Seven:

The Joys of Lifelong Learning

When one door closes, another one opens, but we often look so long and regretfully at the closed door that we fail to see the one that has opened for us.

~Alexander Graham Bell

For some of us, the idea of going back to school is a rather foreign one. We spent our childhoods in school, and haven't been back since our teens or twenties. But there are a number of reasons to continue learning throughout your lifetime, and particularly after you retire.

First, if you want to be competitive in the work force as you age or after you retire, then you may need to take some kind of schooling or training courses. This could be anything from learning computer programs to earning a certification in your field to going back to a college or graduate school degree program. The kind of schooling you choose for this reason will depend entirely on what kind of work you want to do.

A second reason is simpler – learning about something you want to learn about is just plain fun. There doesn't have to be any goal in learning about a new topic – you can engage your mind just for the sake of doing so. Maybe you've always loved the art of Monet and now that you have the time, you would like to take a course about impressionist art. Perhaps you've always wanted to learn to play a musical instrument just so you can enjoy the thrill of learning your favorite songs.

Or, you could have a learning goal related to some of the other things you want to do in retirement. For example, you know you plan to do some traveling to foreign countries, so you want to learn about the history of the places you'll be seeing. Not to mention, learning some of the local language would be great too so you can get around comfortably and maybe even meet some locals.

There's one more very important reason for continuing to learn throughout your lifetime – it keeps your mind young. What do I mean by young? There are the health benefits, for one. Research has shown that you

can delay or prevent the onset of memory loss, dementia, or Alzheimer's disease by keeping your mind active. Plus, investing in learning something you enjoy can be very relaxing, helping to reduce your stress levels and thereby reducing your risk for stress-related illnesses.

No matter what your reasons are for wanting to learn something new, you have a nearly endless number of possibilities to do so. From traditional classroom learning to online classrooms to even international learning trips, you can find an educational opportunity that suits you.

Traditional Classroom Learning Opportunities

If you remember, we talked about the most popular jobs and job fields for people over 50. If you already have training for these kinds of positions, fantastic! But if you don't, then you can certainly pursue the needed training. Start by looking into local technical colleges, community colleges, or universities for relevant programs.

Through these same organizations or through your local continuing education or leisure services programs, you can take classes on a wide variety of topics. You can learn crafts, trades, computer skills, business skills, languages, or other topics in a classroom environment with the kind of student-teacher relationship that you remember. If you like the kind of interaction you get with a teacher and with other students, then this is the kind of class for you.

One response people might have to this idea is, 'won't I be uncomfortable if I am the oldest person there?' Well, it's possible. If you are taking a class that offers no college credit, you'll probably be in a mixed-age group of adults. If you prefer to learn in an environment just for seniors, see if there aren't seniors-only classes offered through local community organizations. There are often senior art classes or other topics available.

But don't let your age stop you from learning what you want to learn. If you are pursuing a degree late in life, you might very well be in a classroom with young students. You might be older than the professor! But that doesn't change your right to be there. Instead of focusing on what others might think about your age, focus instead on what valuable contributions your experience will allow you to make. In some cases, you might have hands-on, real world experience in a subject that your classmates have only read about.

Online Learning Opportunities

If your schedule, location, or preferences are such that you don't want to attend traditional classroom courses, you'll be happy to know that you can do a great deal of training online. Certain certifications, study courses for these certifications, and even entire college degrees can now be earned online.

In some cases, you will actually be a student of a physical university, and you might need to spend some period of time in residence at the school. For example, a master's program might require that you spend ten days each semester on campus, with the rest of the time spent interacting online. Requirements vary widely by school, so be sure to research a course of study thoroughly.

However, you can actually earn degrees completely online now as well as certifications in different areas. I want to caution you on one thing; be sure that you check the accreditation of these programs. This is vital for two reasons: first, you want to know that your degree or certificate will be worth something when you complete it, and second, you will not qualify for government financial aid if the program is not accredited.

Are you concerned that your computer skills might limit you in pursuing online courses? Then visit seniornet.org. This nonprofit organization helps people over 50 learn the computer and internet skills they need to be able to take advantage of what this type of communications technology offers. Plus, the site's online community is a great place to chat with other seniors about common hobbies and interests.

Financial Aid for Technical and College Programs

Sure, you want to go back to school, but how can you afford it on a fixed income? The answer might be with financial aid. You will most likely qualify for subsidized loan programs if you are pursuing a technical college certificate or a college degree. But there are other options for you as well.

First, are you a resident in a state that offers the HOPE scholarship program for college students? Then you may qualify for the HOPE grant. This program allows students of any age to pursue technical training or a degree that is not a traditional four year degree, and in many cases it will pay for everything except perhaps books and fees.

There are also a number of scholarship opportunities for seniors, returning students, non-traditional students, veterans, minorities, women, and those with disabilities. Contact the financial aid office of the school where you want to pursue your certification or degree; they are specialists in helping students find money to go back to school.

Travel and Learning

Are you feeling a bit more adventurous? Why not consider learning while traveling in another city or even while traveling abroad? You can combine the adventure of visiting new places with learning new things. Whether you want formal or informal education opportunities, you can find a class on almost any topic if you broaden your search beyond your town's limits.

If you are pursuing a college degree, you might think you would have trouble studying overseas because of the language barrier. But this isn't really a problem anymore. You can find lots of degree programs that will let you spend a semester or more in foreign universities that actually teach their classes in English. And your financial aid can be used to cover the tuition at these schools in some cases.

But what if you're not interested in studying abroad in a college program – you just want to learn while traveling? Opportunities to do so are increasing all the time as the demand for such experiences grows. One of the leaders in the senior travel learning industry is ElderHostel (www.elderhostel.org). With this organization, you spend time in another city or another country, learning about the area, its history, and its culture.

One Elderhostel program takes place in Tuscany, Italy. The participants stay in an incredible villa in a hill town famous for its wine and spas. They get lectures on the art and architecture of a nearby site or town from a local expert, and then get a guided tour of the same location. There is always free time for participants to explore on their own as well. And they can relax, knowing they have a full-time escort to help with any of the hiccups that can occur in foreign travel.

Another company that caters mostly to the over 50 crowd is TravelLearn (www.travelearn.com). They offer different travel opportunities like cruises or land and cruise tours, and they visit locations around the world as well. This program tends to have more luxurious approach to travel, and limits their groups to a maximum of 20 people.

There are many more opportunities for traveling and learning abroad. Besides the resources listed for international volunteering activities in Chapter Six, organizations like the University of Strathclyde's Senior Studies Institute in Scotland (www.cll.strath.ac.uk/ssi.html) are other options overseas. Or there are also domestic programs, such as the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (www.cel.sfsu.edu/olli/), an offering of San Francisco State University. Once you start researching what's available to you, I think you'll be pleasantly surprised by the variety of choices out there.

Chapter Eight:

Should You Stay or Should You Go?

*My parents didn't want to move to Florida,
but they turned 60 and that's the law.*

~ Jerry Seinfeld

It is a commonly repeated stereotype that once people retire, they want to move to Florida. But like many stereotypes, this one has its roots in truth. Florida is the known choice for so many retirees because of the benefits it provides to those who are facing the reality of living in a body that is aging.

The mild winters are easier on the elderly than freezing cold temperatures that they might have experienced in their previous state. The lack of freezing temperatures also reduces certain risks of injury. With no risk of slipping and falling on icy steps, the elderly living in warmer climates will have fewer such accidents. The lack of icy roads in Florida will also mean it's easier to feel comfortable driving for longer. Plus, the majority of the houses in Florida have only one story, so there are fewer stairs to maneuver for aching joints.

Because so many senior citizens have moved to Florida, the services and activities they want are now available in abundance. There are leisure activities available everywhere you turn such as golf and swimming, and there is a seemingly endless array of apartment or housing communities that cater to the senior citizen client.

But of course, not everyone who retires will want to move. If they do move, it could even be to another home in the same community. Or if they do move out of town, they might want to move to plenty of other places besides Florida – and for a number of different reasons.

According to AARP, the Baby Boomers are not big movers. Less than 5% of them move to another county each year, and even fewer move to another state. They predict that most Baby Boomers will choose to stay in the home that they've invested in because they see it as a legacy they can leave to their children.

Of course, you may have a very good reason to move. Some possible reasons for moving include:

- Downsizing to a more manageable size home or a more affordable home
- Being closer to family members
- Being near good friends
- Having a home that is one floor or handicap accessible
- Living closer to good health care services
- Living in a retirement or independent living community
- Living in a cheaper area of the country
- Experiencing a new area of the country or even another culture
- Living in a different climate or topography such as on water or in the mountains

With all of the choices of places that you could move, how can you choose where to go? The good news is that there are a number of resources to help you make the decision. But before you do, be sure that you know what you want out of your new location. What features are most important to you?

For example, if you know that you want to live within a few hours of your children and grandchildren, you would be limiting your choices to a radius of about 100 miles around their location. Or if you know that you want to live in a college town because of the number of opportunities for continuing your education, then you have one criterion to start filtering your choices.

Do you want to live in a town that is known for the arts, for sports, for politics that align with yours, or for its cultural diversity? Or is it more important to you that you will have plenty of job opportunities, so you know that you should choose a town that is experiencing growth?

If you aren't sure, don't worry. Luckily, a number of researchers have attempted to come up with suggestions on how to choose your retirement

location, and some have even made their own recommendations for the best choice for retirement towns.

US News and World Report has created a search tool that lets you determine what criteria are important to you in choosing a retirement location. Their search engine compares the criteria you choose to information on more than 2,000 towns to give you some recommendations. Criteria include things such as climate, the cost of living, recreation opportunities, and others.

If you don't make a selection on a criterion, it will not be used in generating your list. When you're done making your choices, you can click 'Rank Results' to get a customized list of locations that match your criteria. Click on the individual cities for more information, or you can browse through the results by state. You can explore the search tool at:

<http://www.usnews.com/directories/retirement>

US News and World Report also has a list of the top-ten places to retire that they came up with after evaluating towns on a number of different aspects that their readers rated as being important. These towns can be explored more on their website:

- [Bozeman, Montana](#)
- [Concord, New Hampshire](#)
- [Fayetteville, Arkansas](#)
- [Hillsboro, Oregon](#)
- [Lawrence, Kansas](#)
- [Peachtree City, Georgia](#)
- [Prescott, Arizona](#)
- [San Francisco, California](#)
- [Smyrna, Tennessee](#)
- [Venice, Florida](#)

AARP has created their own list of the top 15 towns to retire, using a very thorough set of 10 different criteria, though they also state that their intention was partly to highlight towns you may not have heard of before. The criteria they used were:

- How many jobs there are available
- How affordable housing is
- The range of culture and entertainment available
- The range of outdoor recreation available
- Safety – both for your person and your property
- Presence of colleges or universities
- Sense of a central, downtown, pedestrian-friendly area
- Distance to good, comprehensive medical care
- Presence of good public high schools, since many retirees may still have teenagers
- Quality of public transportation

Their resulting choices for the best places to retire are:

1. [Loveland / Ft. Collins, Colorado](#)
2. [Bellingham, Washington](#)
3. [Raleigh / Durham/ Chapel Hill, North Carolina](#)
4. [Sarasota, Florida](#)
5. [Fayetteville, Arkansas](#)
6. [Charleston, South Carolina](#)
7. [Asheville, North Carolina](#)
8. [San Diego, California](#)
9. [San Antonio, Texas](#)
10. [Santa Fe, New Mexico](#)
11. [Gainesville, Florida](#)
12. [Iowa City, Iowa](#)
13. [Portsmouth, New Hampshire](#)
14. [Spokane, Washington](#)
15. [Ashland, Oregon](#)

You can read a summary description of each town and the main benefits each one offers on the AARP website at:

<http://www.aarpmagazine.org/travel/Articles/a2003-03-27-mag-bestplaces.html/page=1>

If you're not yet ready to move at this time, but you know that you would like to in the future, then you could follow a relatively popular trend amongst Baby Boomers – buying a vacation home in the place you would like to eventually retire. Then you can slowly make the transition of spending more and more time there until you are ready to make the move.

Or, if you can afford it, you could keep both homes. If you're not sure you want to have two mortgages, you could also consider buying and renting out your holiday home to help cover the cost. There are plenty of property management companies who could help to find the tenants for you and manage the property in your absence.

There is one other consideration when you're thinking about moving. The process of moving can be rather stressful for a number of reasons. Leaving a home that you have spent a great deal of your life in or raised your family in can be an emotional event. If you find that you need to downsize your possessions to fit into a smaller home or an apartment, it can be difficult to choose amongst a lifetime of possessions to determine what to take and what to leave behind, or what to leave with a child, a friend, or a local charity shop.

If you've lived in the same town for a number of years, then you get very comfortable with your surroundings. You know your neighbors, the best shops, the areas of town that are safe and the ones to avoid.

Starting over in a new town can be especially difficult. You'll need to get used to a new climate, new places to shop, new neighbors, and possibly a new culture. Don't be surprised if you experience culture shock after moving from one region of the country to another. But you can certainly adjust in time; just build into your new life some time for recovering from the stress of a move.

You can ease the emotional stress of a move by following some of the following steps:

- Give yourself plenty of time to go through your stored items; expect it to be an emotional experience.
- Make room in your new home for the things that are important to you. If for some reason you can't, ask your family and friends if they would like to provide a good home for the item(s).
- If there are products in your hometown that you love which are not available in your new town, make sure that you pack a good supply of them to take with you.
- Ask your existing health professionals if they have any recommendations for colleagues in your new town.
- Learn as much about your new town as you can before you get there. Read the online issues of the local paper. Have a list of organizations and events that will take place in your new town so that you can get to know your new town and feel 'at home' as soon as possible
- Consider joining online chat groups or email listservs that focus on your new town or city – even before you move there. Not only can you learn a great deal, but you can ask any other questions you might have and get answers from people who live there. (As always, be careful about sharing any personal or identifying information with someone on the internet)

Besides moving into your own home in a new location, you could make other moving choices. There are a growing number of seniors who are choosing to live in independent living retirement communities. In many of these, the senior lives in an independent apartment, but there is staff on site that could respond in an emergency.

You could also look for a shared living situation. These can be a very cost-efficient way to live after retirement, if you don't mind sharing your space with others, of course. A shared living situation can happen in a few different ways. You could advertise for a person to move into your home. You could respond to such an advertisement from someone else.

Or, you could consult the National Shared Housing Directory, which lists a number of resources for finding a shared living situation (www.nationalsharedhousing.org). Look for a match-up program that will pair you with a suitable, compatible person based on interviews and home

visits. You will pay a fee for using the service, but you'll also have the assurance of reference checks and a formal homeshare agreement.

Moving Abroad

We talked about travel in Chapter Six, and by now you know that travel is a very common pastime for retirees. With plenty of time on your hands, learning about new cultures and having new experiences can be a wonderful way to add excitement and adventure to your retirement years. If you decide to travel abroad, especially if you travel to a country that is your ancestral home or where you have some other emotional connections, you may find yourself drawn to a foreign country.

With the modern conveniences we have today, it's not difficult to travel or even move to other countries. If you have the resources and the desire, moving to another country is an experience that cannot be duplicated by simply visiting a country. When you move there, you have a chance to peel back the layers of a culture that you only scratched on the surface during your travels. You can find yourself making friends from all over the world. Imagine sitting at a dinner party where there are four or more different languages being spoken, and stories are being shared that shed light on how different, but yet how similar, people from around the world can be.

You can start looking into the possibilities by finding some expatriate groups on the internet. There are forums and listservs online that cater to those living abroad or interested in doing so. If you are interested in living in a European country, I can almost guarantee you that there will be a publication and/or website in English that is directed at the expatriates living there. One example is www.wantedinrome.com. This site has a classified ads section with housing and job offers, as well as interesting articles about the city and a calendar of current events.

However, be aware that in English-only papers or sites, you may face higher pricing than you would if you were a resident of the country. This is where the expat sites can be so helpful – people already living in the country can help you determine what prices are fair and what prices are being inflated for foreigners.

If you do think you want to move to another country, you will need to do a great deal more research in order to make sure that you have considered all of the factors that could impact your stay and your experience. You can certainly ask the people you may have met on

expatriate websites, but particularly when it comes to the legalities of a situation, always check for yourself. Laws can change quickly and you want to be certain that you make your decision based on the most current and accurate information available. Here is a list of topics to start with, though these topics will certainly bring up more questions for you to answer before you make the big move:

- What, if any, travel advisories for US citizens are there for the country you're considering? Your physical safety and your health could be impacted by these, so be sure to investigate them.
- What is the cost of living there? How does the dollar compare? Be sure you understand what the dollar will buy there, and whether or not you have enough income to maintain the kind of lifestyle that you need to be comfortable.
- Are there any restrictions on how long a US citizen can remain in the country? Do I need to get a visa or other type of permission to stay? These requirements vary from country to country, so you will need to check on the country's embassy website to get the information.

There may be exceptions to these rules if you can prove that you have enough money that you won't be a 'burden on the system,' or if you are willing to invest a certain amount of money in a business in your new home country.

- Do you have pets? If so, you'll want to research the laws related to bringing them into the country. There will definitely be inoculation requirements and vet records you'll need, but there could also be a quarantine requirement. You might not want to bring a pet with you and put them through that kind of trauma. Finding a home for them with friends or family might be a better option.
- Do you have any medical conditions? Be aware that you might not be able to get the same level of medical care that you are used to in your newly adopted country. In fact, the medications available may be slightly different. Over-the-counter medications will definitely be different. So just be certain that you are aware of any medicines that you might want to continue getting filled in the US or that you might want to bring with you on trips back home.

You can visit the US Embassy's site in the foreign country to get some more information on medical care – particularly medical care

that might be available from English speaking providers. You will also want to check with your medical insurance provider to determine whether or not your coverage will be valid if you receive treatment in a foreign country. If not, you may be able to buy some extension coverage that will protect you in case of an emergency.

One word of caution; few countries have the level of handicap accessibility that we do. If you have mobility issues, be sure that you have investigated whether or not you will find it difficult to move about in your new location, and make sure that your home will be suitable for your needs as well.

- How will you manage your finances from the foreign country? If you are receiving pension and Social Security payments, can you get them deposited to an account that you can access from your new home? Although you can access your American bank account from an ATM in a foreign country, you won't want to do that for long because you are charged rather high fees and because you won't want to have to carry cash all the time. You may want to research banks that have branches in your new country and in America. That way you can avoid the problem of how to get your money in America to you in your new country.

You may also need to get some help from friends or family to assist you with your financial affairs. This is particularly the case if you keep other accounts in the US or if you keep any property here. Of course, you might have to hire a professional to help you with some things, like managing your property if you rent it out, or helping you to file taxes. Taxes can get complicated if you are living in one country and 'earning' from another.

- Have you thought about other amenities that you might want or need once you move overseas and whether or not they are readily available? For example, will you want a car? How expensive is it to keep a car, pay for insurance, fuel, and parking? Do you expect to have air conditioning? Very few countries have air conditioning as a standard in homes like we do. You may be able to get a unit installed, but be sure you understand what that will do to your household bills. In fact, many of the amenities you may be used to, such as lots of hot water, dish washers, microwaves, clothing dryers and more may not be readily available.

Of course, one main concern you will need to address is how your family will feel about you moving to another country. Are they comfortable with you being so far away? Will you be able to afford regular visits? If you have grandchildren, will you be ok with not being there for some of the big moments as they grow up? You should have some conversations with your family members and with your spouse or partner to see if you think the reality of moving abroad is something you can truly see yourself doing.

That said, remember that you can always move back home again. If you think living abroad would be a dream come true, or even just an interesting phase of your life, then go for it. America will still be here if you decide it was the wrong choice for you.

Chapter Nine:

The Togetherness Factor

When you retire, you switch bosses - from the one who hired you to the one who married you.

~Gene Perret

Decisions about retirement are some of the most important and life-altering decisions that a couple can make. As with so many important choices, the process of reaching decisions about retirement can cause some conflict. You may have different ideas about what it means to retire, where you want to retire, or even how much money you will need to retire.

Plus, once you have both retired and you suddenly find yourselves together more often than you have been in years, you may experience additional conflict. It's not uncommon for couples to find that they 'get under each other's skin.' At the least, you will likely experience some rough spots as you try to adjust to this new phase of your relationship.

The Emotional Issues of Retirement

First, let's discuss the conflict that can come simply because retirement can be an emotional period that puts each of you on edge. Recognize that such a significant life change can cause unexpected emotional reactions as you move from the working phase of life to the retirement phase.

These emotions may make you more irritable or more likely to be in conflict with each other, particularly if one of you needs to continue working while the other goes into retirement. You can attempt to prevent some of the problems that could occur during the change to retirement by preparing for them. The way to prepare is to talk to each other about what your expectations are about retirement.

Also be prepared for some mental and emotional changes in yourself and in your spouse upon retirement. When we have spent a great portion of our lives identifying ourselves by what we do, it can be difficult not to have that part of your identity any longer.

Think about it for a moment – when you're at a party and you meet a new person, what's one of the first things you ask besides their name? It's 'what do you do?' Once you're retired, you or your spouse may feel as if you are somehow 'less than' you were before, even though logically you know that this isn't true.

You may become hyperactive for a time, trying to find some new activities to fill the time. Or, one or both of you could experience depression. Be sure you check in with each other regularly as to how you are each feeling so you can remain abreast of your mental state and your spouse's.

Topics to Discuss

When you sit down to discuss how you feel about these issues, make sure that you choose the right time. Turn off the television, agree to let the telephone ring, and commit to talking for as long as you need to. Some of the topics to cover could be:

- State of Your Relationship – are there aspects of your relationship that trouble you? Are you confident that you can manage these issues after retirement? Do you need to take some time to improve your communication skills so that you can have productive conversations without arguing?
- Money – this is the most common cause of arguments in a marriage, both before and after retirement. What changes will be required in how you spend it? What will each of you need to sacrifice in order to live on a fixed budget? Who will go back to work if money gets tight? What goals do you have as far as savings? Do you agree on whether or not you will accrue any additional debt?
- Roles – how will your responsibilities change after retirement? If one of you retires and the other doesn't, will the retired one take on the bulk of the housework or the financial management? How about if you both retire together?

- Goals – what do you hope to accomplish during retirement? Does one of you want to spend a great deal of time relaxing but the other one wants to travel, pick up a new hobby, or volunteer a number of hours a week? Can you support each other's goals? What will the typical day be like for you both after retirement?
- Time – how much time do you each expect to spend with the other person? If one of you wants the two of you to be together all the time and the other wants more personal time, there will almost certainly be some hurt feelings. How do you feel about pursuing your goals individually? Can you identify one or more activities that you can pursue together?
- Location – have you discussed where you want to retire? Does one of you want to move to warmer weather but the other wants to stay near your children? Start having this discussion as early as possible. There may be a way to compromise so that you are both able to have some time in the places that are important to you.
- Family – do you have aging parents that you need to consider? What are your thoughts about how you will care for them in the future? Does one of you want them to move in with you but the other doesn't? What about your children and grandchildren? How much time will you be spending with them and will you be taking on any degree of care for your grandchildren? How will any of these situations impact your other retirement goals?

When to Talk about Retirement

It may seem silly to talk about some of these topics ahead of time. But you will be doing both yourself and your spouse a tremendous favor if you do have these discussions. You may find that you have a significantly different view of how your retirement will go. Like any other stage in marriage, you may need to make some compromises so that you each get to do the things that you have been looking forward to doing.

These conversations about retirement should start at least five years before you expect to retire. That way you both have plenty of time to think about what you want, when you want to retire, and what your expectations are for your life together after retirement.

Plus, you can identify any areas that you need to discuss further, and if you can't come to an agreement you can seek some counseling help. Don't wait until you are fighting and feelings are hurt before you discuss these situations – it's much easier on you both and on your marriage to discuss them before problems develop.

Not Sure Where to Start?

Talking about retirement might not be easy for you – maybe because you're just not sure how to start the conversation. Although there is no 'right or wrong' place to start, there are some questions that are easier than others.

To help the two of you to discuss where you stand on some of these questions, here's a suggested exercise. Below is a list of fill-in-the-blank questions about what you expect retirement to be like. Each of you should answer the questions individually.

Once you're done, compare your answers. Are there any that you both answered identically? Fantastic, then you don't need to worry about that aspect. For the ones that are different, can you identify a compromise? If not, what steps will you take from now until retirement so that you are certain to address the situation before it becomes a stumbling block?

Questions to Consider:

Fill in the blanks with the answer that is most appropriate for situation. If a situation does not apply to you, write "NA." If you have more thoughts on these items, feel free to keep writing on another sheet of paper.

1. I want to retire at the age of _____.

2. I want my spouse to retire _____ (before, after, with) me. My reason for this is _____

3. I want to live in _____ after my retirement.

4. My day to day schedule in retirement will probably be:

5. One important goal of mine for retirement is: _____

6. My spouse can support me in that goal by: _____

7. One important goal of my spouse's for retirement is: _____

8. I can support my spouse's goal by: _____

9. I'm concerned that in our retirement we won't do well with _____

10. Something we can do now to deal with that concern is:

11. Our financial priorities between now and retirement should

include: _____

12. After retirement, our fixed income means that we will have to give

up certain things. I think we should or can give up _____

I don't think we should or can give up _____

Other Concerns or Thoughts: _____

You can always add your own questions to this list as you think of them. The goal is to keep you talking to each other so that there are no surprises – or at least limited ones - when you do retire.

One question couples often have is whether or not they should retire at the same time. Of course this is completely up to the individual couple and their situation such as their financial circumstances. But some psychologists believe that it is easier on a relationship for a couple to retire separately. That way they have more time to adjust individually to retirement instead of being put together full time right away.

Whereas this chapter has so far focused on some of the possible issues you'll face as a couple during your transition into retirement, remember that there is also a great deal of retired life to look forward to experiencing. Retirement can be an incredibly enjoyable phase of your life, and a time when you grow even closer as a couple.

Here are some additional tips on what you can do to better enjoy your retirement together:

- Enjoy intimacy – not just physical intimacy, but emotional intimacy. Go on date nights, rekindle some romance, and take the time to really express what you appreciate about each other. Share your dreams for the next phase of your life, and see how you can support each other's dreams and even create a shared one for you both.
- Enjoy the present moment – try to focus on the time you have with each other now, and enjoy it. Be spontaneous, practice really listening to one another, and experience each other fully. Make time in your busy retired life to simply be together, doing nothing.
- Enjoy being individuals – allow yourself some time for your own pursuits, and give your spouse permission and space for the same. This will make the time you spend together much more relaxed. Neither of you will feel pressured to be there and neither of you will be resentful of the time that you're apart.

Chapter Ten:

The Single Retiree

Retirement...is when you stop living at work and begin working at living.

~ Unknown

If you are single and thinking about retirement, then your situation differs in several ways from that of a married couple. While there is only one of you generating your retirement income, there is also only one of you to generate expenses during retirement. Although you may not have a day to day companion once you retire, you also can enjoy the freedom of not having someone else to consider in deciding what to do with your retirement years.

However, singles can be at particular risk for depression during retirement. For many singles, your job may have provided the majority of your social interaction on a regular basis. When you suddenly find that you don't have that base for socializing, it could leave you at risk for depression if you haven't thought about other avenues for staying connected to others.

You can easily manage the risk if you start cultivating these other social networks before you retire. Then when you do retire, you'll have plenty of choices ready for how to spend your time and who to enjoy your time with. Start by making a list of the types of activities that you enjoy and the hobbies that you would like to explore. Then look for organizations in your town that might provide opportunities to enjoy them. Some possible suggestions of where to find these groups include:

- Continuing education programs at local colleges
- Church or other religious organizations
- The recreation or leisure services department of your local government
- Art museums or shops
- Craft stores that offer classes
- Gyms and athletic associations

- Local newspapers
- Online chat rooms focusing on your town
- Craig's List (www.craigslist.com) or other online classified postings
- Meetup.com

The last three suggestions are online sources, which can be incredibly helpful. Chat rooms will let you speak directly to other people who may know of programs or groups that you haven't heard of. Craig's List is an online classifieds ad site that you can search by city and find almost anything you're interested in. Meetup.com is a site that specializes in bringing people together who are interested in the same thing and are in the same area. You can find writing groups, book clubs, people who want to practice Italian – almost anything. You could join a group or start one if there isn't one already in your area on the subject that you want to explore.

However, be extremely careful when you interact on these websites. Although the majority of the people using them are genuine and truly looking for what they say they are, you should not ever give any contact information to a stranger online that could identify you personally. If you do decide to give them some form of contact, make it an email address that doesn't identify you by name (retiree100@gmail.com, for example).

If you decide to give them a phone number, make it your cellular phone or work phone – not your home phone which could be traced back to your address. And once you decide to join a group offline (in person), be sure that you are meeting in a public place until you are certain that you are in a safe situation.

Activities for Singles

As a single retiree, you can be certain of one thing – you are not alone. With the high divorce rates and longer life spans our society is experiencing, there are certainly plenty of other singles in your same situation. Even business people have noticed this, and have created a number of activities to cater to the retired single crowd. With a phone call to a travel agent or to some local civic organizations you could find any number of events for singles, such as:

- Cruises

- International and domestic travel
- Spas or resorts
- Dances
- Socials or nights out at designated restaurants or bars
- Dinner clubs
- Movie clubs

And even more activities for singles can be found through:

- Singles groups in religious organizations
- Magazines for singles
- Websites for singles

No matter what your age or skill level is, you can always stay active through volunteering. Organizations need help for every aspect of their management and programs, whether you want to serve on a board of directors and help steer an organization or you'd rather just volunteer a few hours a month, you can certainly find more than enough outlets for your community spirit.

Finding a Partner in Retirement

The same divorce rates and longer life spans that have created the market for singles-based events have also meant that there are plenty of single people of all ages. So if you would like to find a romantic partner with whom to spend your retired years, there is certainly the possibility to do so. According to the US Census Bureau, there are approximately 97 million Americans who are over 45, and almost 40% of them are single.

You can't help but see the ads today for online dating sites. While many singles have had success meeting someone through a dating site, others are still reluctant. Some older singles in particular consider the use of technology to meet someone a peculiar way to do so. But if you can think of meeting someone on the internet as just the first step, like seeing someone

at a dance or an event of some kind, then what happens afterwards follows the same kind of path that any dating experience does. You either realize that you're not interested in each other, or you continue getting to know each other. Again, follow the same precautions that you would when responding to internet club or meeting postings.

Other ways to meet someone involve those same social groups that you'll hopefully be seeking out already. If you are both there, it's an indication that you have at least that thing in common. But you can also find excellent potential mates through your friends. Make it known to them that you are interested in meeting someone, and you just may find that they know a great person for you to meet.

Of course, dating or marriage when you are retired has its own set of concerns. You will need to be flexible in your own habits, and watch for areas in which you might be 'set in your ways.' Financial considerations are more involved as well, particularly if you have children. Be certain that you are aware of how your pension, retirement savings, life insurance, and other earnings might be affected by marriage. If you do marry, you will definitely need to update your will to ensure your inheritance goes to whom you wish.

These are issues that can easily be worked out, however. And they are certainly not reason enough to avoid looking for someone to spend your retirement with, if that's what you wish. The joy of a good relationship is worth the headache of dealing with details, and can make your retirement much more fulfilling in the end.

Conclusion

As you have read through the preceding chapters, I hope that you have kept that notebook of yours open and that you've been jotting down your thoughts and answers to the exercises we've done. Don't be surprised if you wake up in the morning thinking about one of these topics. These are the kinds of questions that might need to stew awhile before you find the answer that is best for you.

In another few weeks or even a few months, come back to this book and your notebook. Examine your answers and your thoughts, and see what has changed. Have you talked to your family and your spouse about what you want your retirement to entail and have you checked on their expectations? Have you looked at different places that you might like to retire? Hopefully you are starting to check some of these tasks off of your 'to do' list.

In the mean time, continue to do the research that you need to do in order to create the kind of retirement that you want to have. You are the only one who can set the stage for your retirement years. You can orchestrate a time that is filled with adventure, or you can settle yourself in for the simple joy of peace and quiet – there is no best way to retire. There is only the way that is best for you.

Congratulations on getting here – now go enjoy your retirement!