

Planning Matters



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Retirement Rocks!

WINTER 2015 EDITION

100 Kilometers per Hour to Full Stop!

You're busy! You're diligently advancing your career, paying the bills, raising the kids and saving for your retirement. Likely 30 per cent of all your available life hours are spent traveling to work, grooming for work, or toiling away at your desk.

Let's fast forward. Welcome to your first day of retirement – nowhere to be; no need to get out of your bathrobe or into your car. For some that sounds like nirvana, for others it's their worst nightmare, but even nirvana wears thin if it's a steady diet with no variety.

The shift from active work-life to part-time work or full-time retirement is one of the important tasks of mid-and-later life. Psychologists speak of it as a transition, and like any other transitions it can bring some bumps. Think back to your transition from student to working professional; single to married; couple-hood to family life. All came with a transition process. Imagine adjusting, as one client put it, to, "twice as much husband on half as much income!"

"A rockin' retirement isn't a given, it's an intention. A rich life is a goal worth meeting, but it takes focus that goes far beyond your net worth statement."

Heather Compton

co-author "Retirement Rocks!
Canadian Boomers Invest in Life"

Do you have a picture of what comes next?

The question is significant – what do you want to be when you grow up? You may need to reclaim or rediscover yourself. You define yourself as a parent, partner and businessperson and now you're, "out of work," on two fronts – kids grown plus the job has flown. Who are you now? True also for the A-type accustomed to staff dancing attendance and now with no one to boss. Where does the structure, routine, sense of purpose, identity and social engagement come from?

A rich life is a goal worth meeting, but it takes focus that goes far beyond your net worth statement.

A Life with Style

At the core of virtually all measures of life-satisfaction, is your state of health.

Now you are driving an older vehicle, one where replacement parts don't function as well as the factory originals and you have no option to replace it with a newer model. Creating a vehicle-maintenance schedule becomes your top priority – in fact it's your new job. Just imagine aging into a collector's classic edition!

Dr. Thomas Perls, a leading U.S. longevity expert, says 30 per cent of how we age is influenced by genes, while 70 per cent is lifestyle and habits.¹ He has developed an Internet quiz (livingto100.com) that calculates life expectancy based on family history

and personal habits. Perls produced a long list of characteristics that those who age well share. Among them are a sense of humour and a zest-for-life, which he suggests help to manage stress and keep blood pressure in check. We all know quitting smoking, eating well, drinking moderately and exercising regularly extend lifespan but who knew regular flossing could add a year to your life?

The World Health Organization describes health as, "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." That requires a focus on all aspects of your health – financial, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

Begin Again

Redefining who you are just might require you to try something new.

Have you been a beginner at anything in the last 12 months or less? Did you stick with it long enough to attain a level of enjoyment?

One of life's paradoxes is that easy paths end up being difficult and the difficult paths end up being easy. It's easy to eat chips and neglect exercise, but life gets difficult when that lifestyle impairs our health and mobility. Learning to play the flute is hard, achieving yoga postures is hard, studying a new language is hard, but each time you are a beginner it makes the next beginner experience easier. The

pleasure of accomplishment and the ways in which you enhance your life make it easier, richer and juicier!

Try creating both a to do list and a don't do list – the former what we dream to see, feel, touch, taste, smell or experience before we exit the planet – the latter what we dream never to do again. One of my "Life List" objectives is to try a new-to-me activity every year. As years go by, that may get harder to do, but simply having that intention has led me to say yes to all sorts of opportunities.

Even a fervent golfer will find that 365 days of golf begins to look a lot like work not recreation.



“ We all need a variety of outlets that provide intellectual stimulation, creative expression, solitary contemplation, spectator appreciation, physical activity and social interaction. ”

Sooner Rather Than Later

We often think of retirement as one long time frame, but many who study aging divide that into three distinct phases: the go-go, slow-go and no-go years. Health issues, physical limitations, infirmities or simply a lack of interest may have us less-and-less active and engaged over time.

What activities, travel destinations or interests do you need to pursue in the go-go years? If you want to train for your first 10k run or climb Mount Kilimanjaro should you move up the timeline? Can you wait until the slow-go years to learn another language, play a musical instrument, or enjoy cycle (or wine) tours in Europe?

You'll want to mind-bank lots of great experiences to relive in your no-go years!

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No One is an Island

Asked the secret to a rich-life, many retirees would say relationships - with spouses, friends and the broader community.

As we move into mid-life and beyond our relationship-building skills are likely rusty. Creating new friendships requires both intention and social skills. Often past friendships were cemented as we hung out at the soccer field or hockey arena waiting for our kids. We may need to look further afield and make a greater effort to build our social capital in retirement. Investing doesn't just apply to stock portfolios!

Former work colleagues may not have time to maintain an association and you may cease to have much in common. The glue is gone or they may not have the qualities needed to sustain a lasting friendship. It's useful and enriching to acquire friends that span the generations. Young friends teach us to text and use Facebook, and 90+-year-old neighbours talk about their long-life experience and getting through the tough times.

It's healthy for each partner to have social connections – think of it as yours, mine and ours. It's unrealistic and unhealthy to expect any one person has the capacity to meet all of our relationship needs.

No surprise – social connection is good for you! The MacArthur Study of Successful Aging concluded that people with strong social connections enjoy better health.² Other studies have suggested they also lead to a longer life. Extend your life and improve your health – join a book or hiking club, take a role on a board or in your community, meet the neighbors and make a new friend. Friends of the four-legged variety also count!

A plan for this life phase involves creating a balance between playing, learning, connecting, and contributing.

Choose a retirement life that rocks.



About the Author:

Heather Compton has presented seminars on financial and retirement lifestyle issues for over 30 years and is co-author with husband Dennis Blas of, "Retirement Rocks! Canadian Boomers Invest in Life." She retired as vice-president and senior investment advisor with a major financial services company.

For more information go to
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1. www.drrobertbrooks.com/monthly_articles/1304
2. Successful Aging: The MacArthur Foundation Study" by John W. Rowe, M.D. and Robert L. Kahn, Ph.D. Random House Publishing Group | March 9, 1999 | Trade Paperback

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