

## Retirement - issues to consider

Most people take time to adjust to retirement. A job provides not just money but lifestyle, self-image, purpose and friendships. For those who have turned an interest, hobby or passion into a career, a job is a means of personal fulfilment and creative expression.

Responses to retirement for each person, and depend a lot on the reasons for leaving the workforce. For example, a person who carefully planned for their retirement is more likely to feel positive about it, while a person who is forced into early retirement due to redundancy or illness may find it harder to cope with the transition.

If you're unsure about whether or not to retire, it may help to take long service leave or extended unpaid leave to give retirement living a trial run. Stepping down the number of days you work from five to four, and so on, may make for a more successful transition into retirement.

### Plan your post-work lifestyle

Some people look forward to retirement as an extended holiday where they can finally slow down and 'smell the roses'. Other people expect to have a busier, more active life than when they were working.

In Victoria, the life expectancy for women is around 83 years and for men, 77 years. If you leave work at 65, for example, you could expect between 12 and 18 years (at least) of retirement. How are you planning to live those years? It is important to consider the kind of lifestyle you want before you retire and start to make plans, and even implement some of them, before you leave work.

### Financial issues

Consult with your financial planner, accountant or similar to work out the financial issues of retirement. Some of the factors to consider include:

- The size of your superannuation nest egg
- Other savings and assets
- Whether you have any dependants
- If you are planning to continue working part-time or not
- Your eligibility for pensions or part-pensions
- Financial options if you or your partner fall ill
- The kind of retirement lifestyle you're anticipating.

### Emotional issues

At first retirement can feel like a holiday and the initial phase is often referred to as the 'honeymoon' period. You can sleep in, catch up on reading or hobbies, and spend more time with family and friends. However, once this 'honeymoon' period wears off, you may feel down or depressed. Emotional issues to consider include:

- Our vocation forms part of our identity. Some people can feel a loss of self-worth once they stop working.
- Daily routine and activities add purpose to life. If there is nothing in particular to do or look forward to on any given day, a person is more likely to feel bored and depressed than a person who lives an active meaningful life.
- Spending time on hobbies and interests, for example, may not turn out to be as rewarding and meaningful as anticipated.
- Grandparents may find they are expected to baby sit all the time.

- Partner issues can include differing (and conflicting) ideas on retirement lifestyle.

## Partner issues

Some of the common issues include:

- One partner has retired or plans to retire, while the other wants to continue working.
- Ideas on retirement lifestyle may clash; for example, one partner may want to keep busy with travel, hobbies and volunteer work, while the other expects a more relaxed daily routine.
- It can be difficult at first to work out how much time to spend together. This is particularly the case if one partner is outgoing and social, while the other is more introspective. In this scenario, the outgoing partner may feel ignored, while the introspective partner could feel harassed.
- Some people may try to do everything as a couple, but lack of personal space can cause stress and relationship conflicts.

## Planning can help create a happy retirement

People who plan an active life after retirement tend to be happier than those who have no plans or routines. Suggestions include:

- You've retired from a 38-hour week, not from working altogether. If you love what you do, consider dropping the hours to part-time (if possible), rather than fully retiring.
- Volunteer work is a satisfying way to add structure and purpose to your life, and there are many community organisations to choose from.
- Put time and energy into much-loved interests.
- Try to achieve at least five hours of purposeful community activity a week.
- Think about all those hobbies you wanted to try but didn't have the time – you do now.
- Further education options range from short courses through to university degrees. You could launch a new career during your retirement years, if you wish.
- Reduce the risk of health problems by exercising regularly. Joining a gym, walking club or team sport, which can also add a social element to your weekly routine.
- Make sure that you and your partner discuss ways to accommodate each other's wants, needs and expectations.
- Loneliness is a common source of depression in older people, so make sure you maintain and increase your social networks.

## Unplanned retirement

A person who has retirement forced on them because of redundancy may find it harder to adjust. Suggestions include:

- Ask your employer if it's possible to continue working part-time in the same position.
- Look for other opportunities. There may be another job you could apply for in the same company.
- Apply for jobs with other companies, either full-time or part-time.
- Consider retraining to update your skills and make you more employable.
- Try volunteer work; it may help get your foot in the door and provide valuable contacts.
- Discuss your options and expectations with your partner. Remember that meaningful activities, regular exercise and social contacts can help make retirement a satisfying time of life.
- Seek professional help if you feel prolonged anxiety, stress or depression.

## Where to get help

- Accountant
- Financial planner
- Psychologist
- Career counsellor
- Centrelink Tel. 132 490
- Job Network Information Line Tel. 1300 363 365

- Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs Tel. (03) 9920 4777
- Council on the Ageing Victoria Tel. 1300 135 090
- MoneyHelp Tel. 1800 149 689 Monday to Friday, 9.30 am to 5.00 pm — a free financial counselling and debt advice phone service for Victorians (includes interpreter services)

## Things to remember

- If you're unsure about whether or not to retire, it may help to take long service leave or extended unpaid leave to give retirement living a trial run.
- People who plan an active life tend to be happier than those who have no plans or routines.
- Seek professional help if you feel prolonged anxiety, stress or depression.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Council of The Ageing (COTA)

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