

DOLLARS & SENSE

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Create Your Own Retirement Plan

Health and Fitness

Being healthy is an important part of any successful and fulfilling lifestyle. Keeping yourself mentally, emotionally, and physically fit, raises the odds for an enjoyable lifestyle—whatever your age.

Many health problems are the result of poor lifestyle choices: bad diet, smoking, lack of exercise, stressful living, and abuse of alcohol and drugs are some examples. Choosing a healthy lifestyle including good nutrition, exercise, rest, and a positive mental attitude can solve potential and existing health problems.

Where Do I Begin?

A good place to start is your Doctor's office. A good physical exam or check-up will give you a better view of how to begin your journey toward retirement.

Once you've checked with your doctor, you can look into fitness and wellness programs within your community. Various clinics, senior centers, the local Y, and other groups often have programs designed for people who want to live healthier. They often have specialists to help tailor a program just for

you. You need to include the following areas in your plans for retirement:

Exercise and Retirement

Your body changes as you grow older. Not everyone can do cartwheels or hike up a mountain with the same ability as when they were twenty. But if you start slowly, you may be surprised at the physical conditioning you can achieve. An appropriate exercise program offers a variety of rewards:

- 1) Strengthen your heart and lungs
- 2) Increase your flexibility
- 3) Curb your appetite
- 4) Relieve stress and anxiety
- 5) Help you sleep better
- 6) Keep you mentally alert
- 7) Improve your appearance
- 8) Give you a sense of well being
- 9) Help protect you against illness

Seek counsel about an acceptable exercise program, and make sure you address all your exercise needs. Then only participate in exercise suitable for your needs and abilities. It won't help to do more than you should.

Aerobic Exercise is Best

You need to choose a vigorous and long enough exercise to get your heart rate up. For example, brisk walking, bicycling, swimming, and dancing could suit your needs very well. Beneficial exercise lasts at least 20-30 minutes and takes place at least three times a week. For best results, alternate the days you exercise.

Make your exercises gradual and progressive. Work out with enough intensity to increase your pulse rate, draw perspiration, and make you breathe deeply. Each exercise period needs to include a 5 to 10 minute warm-up and also a cool-down period. Light calisthenics, stretching, jogging in place, and stationary bicycling are good warm-up and cool-down activities.

Nutrition and Retirement

The secret to good nutrition in retirement is to eat the same nutrients but

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Are You Ready to Retire?

Someone once said you never actually retire, you just shift emphasis. You can make this shift gradually or all at once, it's up to you. Your circumstances tell you how and when you're ready. There are many choices available to you once you leave your lifelong profession. There are many myths out there about the "ideal" time to retire. The truth is, there is no standard time that fits everybody. The best time for your retirement is an individual matter.

Retirement Myths



Myth No. 1: Hold on to your job as long as you can!

Retirement doesn't necessarily need to be delayed as long as possible. It is good to continue doing things that bring you fulfillment. Hastily giving up your job may be a mistake. Only you can decide when you're ready to move on to other opportunities.

Myth No. 2: Retire as soon as you can!

There was a book written on how to retire at age 41. It was a true account of a man who retired at 41... but in reality, he ended up returning to work. If you begin a lifestyle resembling retirement

“With health, everything is a source of pleasure; without it, nothing else is enjoyable... Health is by far the most important element in human happiness.”

~ Arthur Schopenhauer

before you're ready, it can be a big mistake. Quitting your career too early may mean you'll miss out on the most rewarding years of your working life. Retiring too soon may affect your feelings of worth and your financial stability. Only you know what's best for you.

Myth No. 3: Retire when you're fed up.

Sometimes a job gets to be too much for you. An unreasonable boss, an

unfavorable working situation or long commute can make you want to quit. But it's better to wait until you're prepared and your plans are in place. Even consider a job or career change—many people have successfully made them in their 60's plus. Remember life isn't supposed to always be easy. It's wiser to stick it out or find a healthier solution, rather than quit before you're ready.

Myth No. 4: Out with the old... In with the new.

Retire and give the youngsters a chance? Don't be influenced by others who may want your job. If you enjoy your work, and feel you've something to offer, age doesn't matter. People retire from their late 40's to early 80's. Base your decision on personal needs, desires, and interests. It's the only way to make retirement work for you.

Are You Ready to Retire?

Take the test from AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) on the next page and find out. To make this as helpful as possible, respond honestly and accurately.

Testing The Water

To evaluate your score, you need to consider several factors affecting your retirement. Even though an action may seem independent, they're each part of the whole picture. You need to think about all the aspects of your situation.

Your Score

The categories are listed in order of importance in deciding if you're ready for retirement. The money factor is more important than health, and so forth.

Now add up the subtotals for your total score, and use the following schedule to determine how ready you are for retirement. If you scored:

- **Over 100:** Chances are you're both realistically and mentally ready to consider retiring now. It's a good time to discuss it with all the people involved.
- **80-90:** Your decision is still up in the air. The advantages and disadvantages seem to balance each other. Maybe your own picture of retirement isn't exactly clear or you haven't put enough work into your retirement plan.
- **Below 80:** You're not ready for retirement just yet. Evaluate your positions and alternatives in each area. You need to make better preparations and adjustments to be able to face the challenges of a change in lifestyle right now.

Getting The Water Ready

Before you dive into a pool each summer, you want to know it's been properly cleaned and prepared. With planning and preparation, everyone can get ready to retire when the time's right. Here are three suggestions to help you prepare and adjust so you'll be ready for retirement:

1. Don't let them retire you. When an individual feels they're being "forced" to do something, it's much harder. If you must leave a job, find another job that's fulfilling. Don't stop working until you're ready.

2. If you choose to retire, regard it as the "ultimate promotion." View it as a new phase of your career. Where you can earn greater satisfaction and rewards.

3. Be excited by the opportunity. Look at the positive aspects of retirement instead of focusing on the negative. The rewards can be endless if you've properly planned and prepared for your retirement. ■

Are You Ready to Retire?

Take this test from AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) and find out. To make this as helpful as possible, respond honestly and accurately. If you're retired now check the one statement in each group that is the most true for you.

Finances

- 50 ☐ I haven't saved enough money to make it right now.
- 5 ☐ I probably have enough money to scrape by, but only without much inflation.
- 10 ☐ I can make it if I live and buy smart and cut back on extras.
- 15 ☐ I'm okay for a while at my present level of income.
- 25 ☐ I've enough money for most retirement situations.
- 50 ☐ Money is not a problem.

Health

- 5 ☐ My current work keeps me active, gives me exercise, and helps me watch my diet and personal habits.
- 5 ☐ I feel my work favors my health because it involves good exercise on a regular basis.
- 15 ☐ My work usually wears me out by the end of the day. If it weren't for weekends, I'd be completely burned out.
- 50 ☐ My work's a terrible strain. It drains my energy, keeps me on edge emotionally and physically, and also affects my sleep.

Relationships

- 5 ☐ I believe my personal relationships would suffer from the loss of my friends at work, and I think my spouse and I won't get along well when spending a lot of time together.
- 0 ☐ I don't have many friends outside of work; my social life would be greatly reduced.
- 10 ☐ I don't depend much on people I meet at work for socializing, and have a good group of friends and relatives who'll continue to give me a full social life.
- 25 ☐ Once I retire, I'll have even more time to devote to my many relationships.

Emotional Outlook

- 10 ☐ I'm not emotionally prepared to stop work. I wouldn't be able to make many of the necessary adjustments.

- 5 ☐ I doubt retirement is going to be very hard for me; I'm pretty flexible in my outlook.
- 15 ☐ I find the idea of retirement exciting and appealing.
- 30 ☐ I can hardly wait for retirement. There are so many things I want to do.

Housing

- 5 ☐ I would have to give up where I live now for something less desirable if I retired.
- 5 ☐ My retirement won't affect my housing arrangements much either way.
- 15 ☐ My expected retirement benefits will help me do a lot of work on the house I've put off, which will give me activities I enjoy and also increase my home's value.
- 20 ☐ I could move from my current home to a better suited one, giving my whole life a lift.

Work

- 15 ☐ I would miss my work terribly. There's so much more I want to achieve before I quit.
- 0 ☐ I can take my work or leave it.
- 15 ☐ I'm proud of my work record and feel I've achieved about all I want to there.
- 25 ☐ The day I leave the job will be one of the happiest days of my life.

Activities

- 10 ☐ I'll never find anything else to do I'll enjoy as much as I enjoy my job.
- 5 ☐ I enjoy my life on the job as much as anything I might do on the outside.
- 10 ☐ I like the idea of getting on to new things.
- 20 ☐ I've wanted to do many other things for a long time. When I retire, I'll finally have enough time to do them.

TOTAL (Using value of your choices from ALL 7 areas.)

Create Your Own Retirement Plan

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fewer calories. Retirement meals designed with this in mind will serve you well. Seeking the advice of a nutrition professional is a fantastic way to improve your health.

The National Research Council recommends the following program:

- Milk Group—milk, cheese, and other dairy products. Two servings daily.
- Protein Group—poultry, seafood, eggs, meat, and protein alternatives such as beans, nuts, seeds, and grains. Two or more servings daily.
- Bread Group—whole-grain breads, cereals, and other grain products. Four or more servings daily.
- Vegetable and Fruit Group—all vegetables and fruits. Six or more servings daily.

It's always a good idea to cut down on certain substances in your diet, including fat, sugar, salt, and caffeine. A balanced diet also contains fiber and plenty of water.

Alcohol consumption can affect nutrition. Moderate drinking may aid digestion, relieve stress, and stimulate the coronary arteries. But as you age, your body changes the way alcohol is metabolized. The amount of alcohol your body may have tolerated when you were younger could be a problem later in life. Alcohol contains no nutrients, and mixing it with certain medications can create serious problems. Everything in moderation is a good rule.

Keeping trim can become a challenge in later years. Weight often escalates when you don't exercise. If you need to lose weight, lose it slowly but steadily. Don't eliminate

foods from the basic food groups—simply cut down on your portions. Curb your intake of alcohol and sweets. Most of all, follow your exercise program carefully and consistently.

Stress and Retirement

Stress has become an everyday part of life. A globally connected world filled with amazing technology has some wonderful advantages, but it also can add a great deal of stress. It's more common to work from home, and be reached by email or cell phone, so there isn't any place to get a break. Stress can be very harmful to your mind, body, and spirit. Continual stress can lead to ulcers, hypertension, and heart attack or stroke.

Coping Strategies

It's important to understand stress, so you're better prepared to handle it. Here are some good coping strategies for successfully dealing with stress:

- Recognize stress—admit that you're experiencing it.
- Identify the cause of stress—it can come from some surprising sources.
- Enjoy stress-relieving activities. Realize you can't control every situation.
- Exercise is a great stress reliever and easily available—just go for a brisk walk.
- Rest and getting enough sleep is important for reducing stress.
- Use relaxation techniques for mind and body like yoga, music, reading or meditation.

- Avoid self-medication through alcohol and substance abuse.
- Laughter is another great stress reliever—especially when you laugh at yourself.

You're in Charge of Your Health

You must take charge of your own health. Try joining a gym or a healthy cooking class. Your body and mental health are your responsibility. Recognize changes or early warning signs of potential health problems.

Be prepared when seeking medical help. Be ready to describe any symptoms, and provide all relevant background information and any medication you're taking. If you've doubts about treatment or procedures, speak up and get a second opinion—it's your life.

Inquire about any alternative treatments, side effects, or more clarification on any procedures. Always ask about the cost and level of insurance coverage. Bring any questions with you in writing so you won't forget, and insist they're answered clearly until you fully understand. Being prepared to handle different health issues is a major part of planning your retirement. ■



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