



Fighting the post-career blues: Finding meaning after retirement

While most people long for the days when they can kick back, sleep in, and have the freedom to do whatever they'd like, an unstructured lifestyle in retirement can present unexpected challenges.

Common problems that can arise include experiencing stress amid the transition from scheduled days to those without a plan, feeling disconnected from others, lacking purpose, and experiencing lack of fulfillment or restlessness.

A good plan can help mitigate these issues. While having a sound financial plan is critical to gaining stability in retirement, the personal side of your plan is just as important and can serve as a crucial guide to how you divvy up your retirement assets.

It all starts with a simple question: What do I want to do in this next stage of my life?

Look inward

Retirement-bound individuals would be remiss to not ask themselves how they might want to spend their time in the years ahead. Yet asking these tough questions — questions that push you to dig deeper within yourself to discover what kinds of activities or relationships could fill the void that the workplace provided — is critical to finding meaning in this next stage of life.

You should consider how to find meaning when it comes to:

Social interaction

Cultivating and sustaining relationships with friends and family

Mental stimulation

Continuing to sharpen the mind through intellectual activities

Finding purpose

Pursuing a passion to find and maintain a sense of purpose in life — perhaps investing time in something that once wasn't practical, but that now nourishes the soul and brings excitement to life

Let's dive into each of these areas.

Find meaning through relationships

Finding meaning in retirement often involves going beyond yourself, contributing to the broader community, servicing society, or taking care of others. Getting a pet, volunteering at a hospital, or babysitting grandchildren are all ways to fulfill that basic human need to connect with and show compassion toward others. A Center for National and Community Service (CNCS) study found that 70%



of retirees who were prone to depression experienced fewer symptoms one year after beginning to volunteer.

Keeping relationships alive during a more unstructured phase of life can present its own challenges, and it often takes a combination of proactive scheduling and internal motivation to carve out the time and energy needed to serve others. Many individuals find purpose in life by engaging in their community or a purpose beyond themselves.

Financial Tip

Think about what charities you might want to support, and how any donations you give might factor into your financial plan in retirement. It might also be worth considering the ideal balance between providing monetary support and contributing to a charity with time and service.

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Sharpen the mind

Research shows that retiring from work can lead to a decline in cognitive function — so it's critical to find ways, every day, to stimulate the mind, master new skills, and solve problems. When the brain functions that we once used daily — such as calculating a math problem or writing a memo at the workplace — become dormant, those connections can weaken and fade.

A U.K. study found that lack of regular mental stimulation can take a heavy toll on cognitive function, speeding up memory loss and dementia. From learning how to play an instrument, to reading a series of mystery novels, to taking a class at a local college, many hobbies can help keep your mind sharp.

Financial Tip

Consider what funds you might be able to devote toward taking a class in a new language, subject, or instrument and create a monthly budget — tracking how those dollars impact your nest egg in retirement, over time.

Cultivate a passion

To discover your true passion, it's important to ask yourself, "What gets me out of bed in the morning? What will inspire me to create and help me reach my highest potential?"



Those headed into retirement should consider what hobbies they might want to pursue in this next chapter. What activities were once hard to carve out time for after work or on weekends?

It might take some searching to figure out what your passion might be. But it's worth considering the following questions on that journey of discovery:

- What activities did I enjoy as a child? Are there new iterations of that activity I could pursue as a senior?
- What kind of physical fitness do I enjoy? Is there a community where I might be able to stay active alongside others who are my age?
- What hobbies make me feel most alive and connected with the world? Are there activities that create within me a sense of peace?

The answers to these questions could get you one step closer to discovering your true passion and achieving a greater sense of purpose in the world.

While rest and relaxation can be nice — and certainly well-deserved for those retiring after a long and meaningful career — it's important to think about how to stay active, both in the community and in the mind.

For more information, please contact your Key Private Bank Advisor.

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Page 2 of 2

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