**Training for Retirement**

Though retirement seems like an easy lifestyle to embrace, the adjustment can take more preparation than you’d think.

For most Americans, reaching retirement is one of the biggest and most difficult goals in life. Retirement takes decades of saving and preparation and requires you to make major decisions about income, expenses and traveling.

Despite all this planning, most people reach retirement unprepared. Even if their finances are in order, many are not familiar with what a retirement lifestyle truly entails. With decades of expectations and savings on the line, shouldn’t we be practicing our retirement before it begins?

Here are just a few exercises that can help you adapt to your retirement plans:

**Prepare to Work**

The sudden disappearance of work can cause a lifestyle shock that many prefer to avoid. Whether reducing hours at your current career or finding a low-demand job, pursuing a “partial retirement” can broaden your options and bulk up your income until you are prepared to leave the workforce.

If you plan to pursue a “retirement career,” such as a hobby business or consulting, you can maintain financial flexibility by setting up the career before you retire. If you will be relying on the retirement career for income, involve yourself in the work for several months (or a few years) prior to retirement. This will help ensure that both your skills and your enthusiasm are strong enough to make the career successful and enjoyable.

**Prepare to Not Work**

For those ready to be done with work forever, it is extremely important to map out hobbies and goals to pursue in retirement. Because we spend our adult lives working, it becomes easy to convince ourselves that leaving the workforce will answer our problems. The reality, however, is that most of us spend so much time at work, we aren’t certain what else should fill our time.

Even if you have a hobby you love, you’ll need something that can occupy an extra 40-60 hours a week for several years. Pre-retirees should plan how they intend to fill their daily lives and experiment with different pastimes, trying them for several...
months to ensure their interest is genuine. All too often, people spend years dreaming about a future hobby, only to discover later that it is not what they expected.

Test Your Budget

One of the most important aspects of retirement planning is making sure your income is adequate. While you may have an excellent idea of how many dollars you’ll get each month, the effects of living on that budget may not be apparent on paper. Prior to retirement, spend a few months living on your estimated retirement income so that you can identify any potential limitations. While these discoveries may be unpleasant, delaying retirement is always preferable to going back to work later in life.

Know Your Home

If you are planning to move to a different city, state or country for your retirement, it is a good idea to get to know the location well. Just because you have fond memories of vacationing in an area doesn’t mean you’ll enjoy it year-round. In the years before you retire, try living in your desired destination for multiple weeks during various seasons. Try out different sized living spaces and see what meets your needs and your budget. An unexpected move in the middle of retirement can cause major problems for your finances.

Many changes come with retirement, and not all of them are good. Fortunately, practice can greatly improve how you handle these issues. It’s not that you can’t fix problems during retirement—it’s that you won’t want to spend your retirement fixing problems.

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