

Strategies for a Satisfying Retirement

Talk Notes

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<http://www.123rf.com/search.php?word=25151281>

1. Intro:

Financial security is fundamental to a successful retirement. But there is more...! John Wasik in his book *The Late-Start Investor* says, *“Unless the future is looked at holistically, merely saving up a pile of money will be a meaningless act.”*

The French may have got it right when they speak about the three ages of man: the **Age of Learning** (when we study and prepare for a career), the **Age of working** (our actual career) followed by the **Age of Living**. (Doing those things that provide meaning and purpose to our life and which may even generate an income.

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This is what **Ruth Westheimer (Dr Ruth)** sex therapist has to say about retirement: “... the term for ‘retirement’ sounds like dying. We have to

substitute something that offers new possibilities ... Refire, rehire, rewire.” **The old model all work and then no work is extinct.** Now a gradual phasing of work life. Not ‘Jumping off the cliff’ abruptly. In the previous generation the focus was on the benefits of leisure. It hasn’t delivered.

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Okinawa: Longevity Island. Do not have a word for retire. Instead they have another word, "ikigai", which translates roughly to "purpose" or "that which makes one's life worth living." The type of comment I hear, at the end to a busy and successful working career is “I am going to travel for three months and then I will tell you what I am going to do”. Sadly for some, unless plans are already in place the ‘Age of Living’ is in danger of becoming an existence without purpose. As a friend reminds me he needs more than a full bladder as the reason to get out of bed in the morning.

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My last day of work at the University: Do your pay-slips tell you how many more pay days to go before retirement? Mine did. And as the number of pay days became fewer I used to wonder what the last day of my working life would be like. All the farewells had been said, kind words had been spoken and it was a Friday evening when I left my office for the last time. The secretary had already left. Two offices down the passage a post graduate student was working. I went along to her office and asked her if she would be kind enough to hand in my keys on Monday morning. She did so, and that marked the end to my enjoyable 29 year university career. A somewhat quite ending, leaving me with a sense of emptiness and uncertain emotions.

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2. Brief history of retirement.

It was the industrial age that created the conditions giving rise to retirement. In the late 1800s, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had come up with a pension scheme in the German Empire to move ageing bureaucrats from their posts. Chancellor Bismarck based the retirement age on a biblical reference to three score year and ten; the average life expectancy at that stage was 46 years of age.

The watershed moment came in 1933, in the deepest, darkest depths of the Great Depression in the United States when Franklin D Roosevelt was faced with 25% of the labour force being unemployed. He settled on the age of 65 for retirement. But in 1935 the average life expectancy in America was 63 years. Hence retirement was seen as the shortest stage in one's life.

The Third Age is a comparatively recent phenomenon. In years gone by it was usually missed out by many. Until the first half of the last century adults spent virtually all their lives in the Second Age, working and caring for family and then usually transitioning straight from Second Age into Fourth age of frailty, dependency and death. Today the length of retirement can rival the duration of your active career and can be 30 years or more. Now we trade intellectual capital not physical labour and are in our prime at 62. Grey hair equals grey matter!

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3. How stressful is retirement?

On Social readjustment Rating Scale retirement scores 45. A useful guide that has been used to attempt to measure stress is the 'The Social Readjustment Rating Scale' (Thomas Holmes & Richard Rahe, 1967). This do-it-yourself stress test which has been around for a long time is based on the premise that good and bad events in one's life can increase stress levels and make us more susceptible to illness and mental health problems. For example, on the Rating Scale the death of a spouse scores 100, divorce 73, marriage (50). Retirement registers a significant 45. It is important that retirement is recognized as a significant life event that needs to be acknowledged and responded to in a thoughtful and skilful manner.

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4. Retirement myths:

(i) Retirement is an economic event exclusively. Mitch Anthony in his excellent book "The New Retirementality" emphasizes that retirement is a life event, not an economic event. He goes on to say that the problem is that many

people prepare a golden nest egg and place it in a dying tree. The nest egg is their retirement savings and the dying tree is their retirement life. We need a flexible life plan that provides not only for your financial needs but your physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs as well. In the wheel of life money is but one spoke. We have focussed on RoI (**Return on investment**). Important to focus on ROL: **return on life**.

(ii) “A life of ease is the ultimate retirement goal.” A life of total ease is one step from a life of dis-ease. “To recline is to decline”. This is because without the healthy tension between working and relaxing, leisure loses its meaning. There is the frightening prospect of **monotonous leisure**. First you become bored and then you become boring and bored retirees can develop bad habits. A coffee shop nearby has this poster: “We serve grumpy old men”.

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— **William Shakespeare**, King Henry IV, Part 1

“If all the year were playing holidays; To sport would be as tedious as to work.”

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Worth noting that a successful retirement is inversely proportional to the amount of time spent watching the TV.

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5. Changing Demographics.

In Western countries fertility rates are falling together with an increase in ageing population. (In 2000: 7%> 65, by 2050: 16%>65). Japan with its low birth rate and long life expectancy, is rapidly greying and already has one of the world’s highest proportions of elderly people the number of people aged 65 accounting for approximately 25 percent of the population.

According to Euromonitor sales of adult diapers In Japan are set to overtake sales of baby nappies by next year a vivid indicator of how rapidly the world's third-largest economy is ageing.

Today people are not conforming to the outdated expectations of age. **60 is the new 40**. 70 is the new 50. Growing older, thinking younger (**GOTY**).

Let us examine the three 'ages' of man and women a little more closely...

1. **chronological** age. (Birth certificate age)
2. **psychological** age (Your think age). If you were asked the question, "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?" Your 'think age' is how old you behave, irrespective of how old you are. The way we think and feel is influenced hugely by how we behave.
3. **real or biological age**.. If you don't smoke, if you exercise regularly, watch your diet and handle stress well your real age could be a lot less than your chronological age. For example, with a healthy lifestyle your chronological age could be 60 but your real age may be 52. Unfortunately the converse applies.

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Amortality: Why acting your age is a thing of the past.

The amortal's form of positive thinking - refusing to contemplate age and death – can bring positive results up to a point. Life spans have lengthened but health spans have not kept pace. And now 'amortality' is in vogue, a term coined by Catherine Mayer for the burgeoning trend of living agelessly. (Amortality: The Pleasures and Perils of Living Agelessly) Hollywood is a source of examples of amortality with Madonna adopting children at 49 and 50 and Hugh Hefner marrying a woman 60 years younger. Amortals rarely ask themselves if their behaviour is age appropriate because that concept has little meaning for them. Clint Eastwood's (born 1930) going strong at 86! 'American Sniper' Earns Massive \$90.2M Weekend. Latest movie he has directed is Sully.. a 2016 American biographical drama film. Ageless Mick Jagger (72) and Meryl Streep (67). Mick Jagger is expecting his eighth child at (72). [Ricky Gervais (GERvays), the comedian, wrote on Twitter: "Soon, Mick Jagger will be buying nappies for two."

Perhaps 'amortality' can be best summed up by a bumper sticker which says: "I refuse to get old". What they may have been forgetting is that "Life is a sexually transmitted disease with a 100% mortality rate.

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6. Why is retirement difficult for some?

Retirement has cynically been described as described having three stages: **Go Go, Slow Go, No Go.**

Often who we are and what we do, become one. Our sense of worth, our sense of identity arises from what we do. The greater the sense of power the more difficult it is to let go. A good example is Sir Alex Ferguson manager of Manchester United. In May 2009 at the age of 68, four years before retiring he said, "I'm going to stay as a manager and my health will tell me when to quit. Let's pray my health will give me five more years. 'You get that same wonderful feeling when you win a trophy'.

When we stop activities that caused our work 'highs' we experience some symptoms of 'withdrawal'. This occurs because part of experiencing this 'high' is due to the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter which gives a jolt of pleasure, keeping us coming back for more. And when we have to stop these dopamine-pleasure-jolt-creating activities in our work environment we can't understand why we don't feel good, and why we can't sleep. A top executive related to me how he would wake up sweating and in a mild state of panic in the early days of his retirement.

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A **2012** study in the Journal of Happiness Studies by Elizabeth Moky Horner, PhD, of the **University of California, Berkeley**, found that retirees experience a "**sugar rush**" of *well-being and life satisfaction directly after retirement*, followed by a sharp decline in happiness a few years later. In her analysis of cross-sectional data from 16 countries in Western Europe and the United States, Horner found that most retirees experienced the **rush-crash pattern regardless of the age they retired.**

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Robert Delamontagne, PhD, author of the 2011 book "*The Retiring Mind: How to Make the Psychological Transition to Retirement aid:*" "People can go through hell when they retire and they will never say a word about it, often because they are embarrassed," Delamontagne says. "The cultural norm for retirement is that you are living the good life."

One out of four retirees has a difficult time and is not at all adjusted—High income folks tend to be happier, but still only 51% of them said they felt completely adjusted to retirement

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STRATEGIES

7. Psychological /emotional portfolio



Strategies and skills on how to adjust to retirement, have not received the amount of attention that they should have; your psychological portfolio, stockpiling those emotional reserves, is equally important.

Yachts in the Bay in Port Elizabeth on a perfect day. Beautiful sight with sails filling. We focus on what is above the waterline (financial portfolio). Let me illustrate:

In 1992 Michael Plant, a renowned American Yachtsman, commenced a solo crossing of the North Atlantic Ocean, from the United States to France. He started out in Coyote a brand new midsize sailboat, fitted with state of the art equipment and electronics. No one was worried about Michael. He was an experienced and capable seaman. But about two weeks into the voyage he disappeared during a storm. He could not be found by radar or by search and rescue. His sailboat was eventually found floating in the ocean upside down 400 miles off course. The 8000 pound (nearly four tons) keel had broken off.

What is not seen, what is below the waterline is what is important; in the case of the yacht, the amazingly heavy keel which stabilizes the boat. When the storms come and the winds blow the sails fill and the yacht remains stable and moves forward.

So what keeps retirement life stable when the when the ‘winds’ blow?

8. Inner world: The 3 P's

Let us examine our Inner World a little more closely:

At any stage of life but particularly when facing a life transition such as moving from the 'Age of Work' to the 'Age of living', it is important that our inner world is in good shape. Three building blocks are identified to ensure a firm platform is in place from which to launch into the future with confidence. They are known as the Three P's: Person, Purpose and Pattern. We examine each one briefly:

(i) Our sense of person- To have a sense of person we need to see ourselves as someone with an identity, someone who makes a difference in some way to some people ... a feeling of worth. We all need a sense of identity, and a sense of worth. But we need encouragement for this to happen. If there is no affirmation, no encouragement it can eventually lead to the loss of a sense of person.

(ii) A sense of purpose-

Find a Purpose. Purpose can be described as the 'traction' of life ... and is an important component of our **psychological well-being**. When we commit ourselves to a cause that we believe in, whether it is to care for others, to learn a new skill or hobby or to educate ourselves, a sense of meaning re-enters our lives and there is a great sense of traction present. To be purposeless is an invitation to develop a victim mentality and to become a victim of circumstances. A sense of purpose - a sense of meaning is vital. Viktor Frankl said it so well, "... there is nothing in the world that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is meaning in one's life."

(iii) A Sense of pattern - Our life normally has a sense of pattern and when **change is part of a predictable pattern, it is more tolerable**, as it is more under our control. Disrupt those predictable patterns or rhythms of life and we wonder why we feel afraid and in danger of falling apart. Our life normally has a sense of pattern: relationships form the basis from which we explore life; our family, friends, neighbours, colleagues at work

are all essential parts of the pattern. The three Ps then, are vital contributors to our emotional wellness.

But...

- take away our **identity** or sense of person;
- make our purposes in life seem futile or unobtainable;
- disrupt our relationships and predictable patterns or rhythms of life ... and **we collapse**.

This was the method of the concentration camps and is also part of the tried and tested approach to brain washing. In retirement too we can be in danger of experiencing a diminished sense of person purpose and pattern. For me it took close on a year to develop a sense of pattern again.

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9. Keeping Emotionally Fit

To cope with change at any time, but especially in times of life transition we need to be emotionally fit. A flexible life plan needed.

can be described as: **Physical, social, mental, spiritual**.

Emotional wellness has been described as a combination of physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual health. They are spokes in the wheel of life. I would add financial health. As vital as it is in the wheel of life, money is just one spoke.

(i) Physical health: Exercise is the wonder drug for the over 50's. Depending on your age and degree of health, there are benefits in getting your heart rate up to 130 beats, three times a week. As a result of the increased physical activity, the endorphins - our natural opiates - kick in and we just feel so much better. Another benefit of exercise is that serotonin levels which elevate mood also increase. **Sleep and Diet** equally important. BMI (Square your height and divide into your body mass: $2m^2 = 4$ divide into 90kgs=22.5 (Donald Trump's BMI is 29.5) Okinawa: **Hara Hachi Bu:** This Confucian adage, intoned like a prayer before every meal, is used as a reminder to stop eating when 80 percent full.

(ii) Social health: To be emotionally well, we need relationships, we need friends; we need a sense of community. We live in an era when loneliness and

isolation are on the increase. Loneliness ...the worst poverty of all. Studies clearly show that the happiest people seem to be the ones who enjoy strong friendships and relationships... and who never stop making friends. We usually miss aspects of work. But what is miss the most is the daily contact with our colleagues. Important to build non-work-related friendships before retirement. **Vitamin F essential:** F=friends....

(iii) Intellectual component: PQ+CQ>IQ = Life-long learner (From: The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century .Thomas L. Friedman.) It is so important to nourish our minds...to challenge the mind. Henry Ford said that it is only when a person stops learning that he or she is old. The acronym GOTY taking the first letters of '**Growing older, thinking younger**' is worth holding on to. Set achievable goals: Having goals makes life more interesting and more rewarding. Mastery/accomplishment vital for well-being.

(iv) The spiritual dimension: An essential component to achieve spiritual wellness and to ensure a robust 'inner world' is a faith to know that we will be given the strength to cope with anything that life has to throw at us.

Luke Seaward, an expert in the field of **stress management**, offers **this prescription for spiritual health**. He suggests:

- (i) Take time for self-renewal.**
- (ii) Learn to forgive.**
- (iii) Put compassion into action.**

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Laugh: As a footnote to emotional health, **remember to laugh**. It is therapeutic. Our immune response is strengthened. Even a smile can have a positive effect on the emotional centre in the brain and we just feel a little better. **Morris, an 82 year-old man**, went to the doctor to get a physical. A few days later, the doctor saw Morris walking down the street with a gorgeous blonde on his arm. A couple of days later, the doctor spoke to Morris and said, "You're really doing well!" Morris replied, "Just doing what you said, Doc: '**Get a hot mamma and be cheerful.**'" The doctor said, "I didn't say 'Get a hot mamma and be cheerful. I said, 'You've got a heart murmur; be careful!'"

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Irish saying: A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book.

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10, Discuss Science of Contentment (if sufficient time).

11. Medically speaking:

Positive side: New research also shows that delaying retirement may stave off cognitive decline and promote better physical health. Warren Buffett/George Soros and Clint Eastwood are 86 are brilliant examples. A study of nearly half a million people by French researcher Carole Dufouil of the research agency INSERM, presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in July last year, found that for each additional year they worked, people reduced their risk of dementia by 3.2 percent.

Down side: Depression. “The Secret Sadness of Retired Men”. The Golden Years have lost their shine for a crucial group of older men. A growing body of research has found that retirement significantly increases the risk of clinical depression and even suicide among men.

<http://www.thinkadvisor.com/2014/06/30/the-secret-sadness-of-retired-men>

The most typical cause of depression in older men is **loss**...emptiness and despair. Men who have attached their sense of identity and value to their work can become depressed in retirement if they can't successfully transfer that attachment to new interests. Other losses—the death of a spouse or peers, loss of work relationships, moving away from lifelong attachment to home and friends—often lead to loneliness and sadness. (Dr M's son's description, "He's not even a doctor anymore!") A man is about as likely to ask for help for depression as to ask for directions, and for much the same reason.

Symptoms: Symptoms that may indicate that the person is depressed include:

- (i) **Feeling sad, empty, hopeless, or numb.**
- (ii) **Loss of interest in things that used to enjoy.**
- (iii) **Irritability or anxiety.**
- (iv) **You have trouble making decisions.**
- (v) **Feeling guilty or worthless.**

(vi) **Thoughts about death and suicide.**

If the person you are concerned about has experienced these symptoms for at least two weeks, depression may be present and a doctor should be consulted. As a trusted financial advisor you may be in a position to help, perhaps suggesting talking to a health care professional

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Differentiate from 'normal' down days. Pencil/smile test. Zygomaticus muscle.

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Anxieties: Late life anxieties are a 'geriatric giant' being twice as prevalent as dementia.

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12. High Risk areas:

(i) **"Adjusting to territorial issues at home..."**

"I married him for better or for worse but not for lunch". To enter into space previously solely occupied by your partner requires understanding and effective communication skills. For some it is the first time in many years that they find themselves on their own. The children have left home, the empty nest syndrome has come and gone and the dog has died. It is often a time of rediscovering each other with the danger that as a couple they may have grown apart during the busy work years. (Incidence of divorce in older couples: Dubbed "grey divorce" by some, calling it quits during your senior years may no longer be a decision that raises eyebrows. **The divorce rate for those ages 50 and older doubled between 1990 and 2010**, according to the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. For those over 65, the increase was even higher. **Time article two years ago: Why Your Grandparents Are Divorcing** <http://time.com/3479037/grey-divorce-boomers-no-fault-divorce/>)

Ageing and intimacy. If there is work to be done on your relationship it would be important to consider consulting with a counsellor. Linked with 'Territorially

Speaking' is the topic of **ageing and intimacy**. With the ageing process physical needs may change but the importance of closeness and intimacy continues to be an important part of a strong relationship. There is excellent information available on this subject which goes a long way to dispelling the myth "that the lights maybe on but the voltage is low!"

(ii) Battling with a loss of sense of identity (person).

As mentioned earlier, who we are and what we do are often closely intertwined and difficult to separate for some. And going from 'Who's who, to "Who's he?" can be a painful. There is the story of a patient, who recognizing her doctor at a function and who had been retired for a few years, going up to him saying "You used to be Dr Brown." Dr M's son when I asked how his father was coping with retirement: "Not well. He's not even a doctor anymore".

(iii) Boredom. Chronic loneliness is a health risk.

Boredom occurs when an individual perceives that they 'having nothing to do'. When there is no focus or sense of purpose in the person's life, then boredom prevails. First they become bored and then become boring. Coffee Shop nearby has a poster saying: "*We serve grumpy old men*" And often during those busy years of building a career there was no time in which to develop an indoor hobby. Boredom is dangerous and can be followed by pessimism with ill health usually not far away. Destructive behaviour is far more likely to occur when a retiree gets bored.

(Be in touch with a professional health care professional if necessary.)

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Close:

I close with words of that world famous businessman, Lee Iacocca best known for spearheading the development of Ford Mustang while at the Ford and then later for reviving the Chrysler Corporation as its CEO during the 1980s. This is what he said at the age of 84 (now 91): "We're living so much longer, what are you going to do with your life? If you don't stay engaged it hurts you physiologically. A couple of my bosses at Ford retired at 65, and they went home to die. They were dead by the time they were 68.They had no

interests. When you atrophy, you die. Retirement isn't the end; it is the beginning."

What differentiates successful retirees from unsuccessful ones? Successful retirees have a positive attitude and are more motivated. (Curious and passionate about what they do).

Is there a short cut to a successful 'Age of Living 'experience? Not really but a 'simple formula that I consider to be profound is: "Have an indoor hobby, have an outdoor hobby and do something good for someone else." It works!

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Below the water line?

How is the stockpiling of your emotional reserves doing? How healthy is your psychological portfolio?

The invitation then is to move from the Age of Work into the Age of Living with a sense of confident anticipation! **"Retirement isn't the end; it is the beginning."**

Tennyson reminds us:

"How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnish'd,

Not to shine in use!"

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Ian Wiseman

23 September 2016
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