



Retirement may not be a life of leisure

According to Statistics Canada by 2036, the number of seniors will be more than double the number of seniors recorded in 2009. In today's world, many people live in good health into their 80s and 90s. Yet little is known about what is needed emotionally, mentally and relationship wise in order to age well and be happy during this late life stage.

The traditional view of retirement as a one-time, one way, irreversible exit from full time employment in the labour force into full time leisure is increasingly outdated. As people move in and out of the labour force, the boundary separating employment and retirement become blurred and less clear-cut. It is a process occurring over time with different stages rather than a onetime event.

Many people naively believe that since they had vacations before they know "how to do leisure". However when this stage last 20-30 years, people often are not prepared

for the negative feelings and decline in psychological well-being that come up for them. Therefore it is very important to help individuals find new ways of being productively occupied and establish personal development with potential for growth and renewal at this life phase of life

Similarly, it is important to alert couples of the changes that will happen in different aspects of their relationships. Much like how the birth of the first child changes marital dynamics, lack of employment, losing one's sense of personal identity as an employed person, being aware of getting older, as well as spending much more time together - all bring new issues to the forefront that very often cause friction. Indeed research clearly shows that the retirement transition cause decline in marital satisfaction with both men and women reporting more conflicts and annoyance with their

spouse. The growing numbers of the gray divorce phenomena (divorce among those who are 50-years old and older) provides a cautionary lesson for every couple entering retirement age.

Psychologist Sara Yogev offers a few steps individuals and couples can take in order to have the best retirement years:

1. Emotionally separate from your work and say goodbye to your professional identity.
2. Be prepared to have mixed feelings.
3. Address issues as they surface and come up.
4. Share your expectations with your partner.
5. Address your feelings about money as they probably will change.
6. Custom design your days- weeks months.
7. Give yourself and your partner enough physical and emotional space.
8. Engage as you age, making sure you stay mentally and physically active.



Sara Yogev, Ph.D. is a psychologist specializing in work and family issues and author of "A Couple's Guide to Happy Retirement and Aging", a comprehensive book devoted to individual changes and relationship issues during the retirement years.



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