

## Counseling Corner

### Starting Now To Make The Retirement Transition Easier

from the American Counseling Association

Even if we like our jobs, most of us look forward to retirement and replacing the stresses of the workplace with free time to do the things we enjoy.

However, many people find the reality of retirement can be challenging and even frightening. Not only are there financial changes, but also some very real lifestyle changes. Retirement usually means less contact or totally losing touch with former colleagues. You may feel like there's less purpose or direction to your life. No longer being a teacher, an accountant, or whatever your profession was, can feel like a very real loss of identity.

But just as you have to plan financially for a successful retirement, there are also ways to prepare prior to retirement for the lifestyle and psychological changes that will occur.

Hobbies can help, but if you worry you'll be bored or without purpose, look for social groups or volunteer opportunities to keep you active and involved. Starting such activities pre-retirement can make retirement more of a transition than a sudden, sharp break in your life. And if recently retired, it's not too late to get active again.

Another option is to not make retirement a full-time job. Many retirees find ways to continue to work part-time, whether in a paid position or as a volunteer. Towns and cities of every size offer opportunities. Schools, libraries, city governments, senior centers, and civic groups always need volunteers. Maybe your past work experience can help a local business as a part-time employee or consultant.

Such activity can help you feel productive and add a sense of purpose and direction to your retirement years. It might even help you live longer and better. A 2009 University of Maryland study found those who kept working had fewer major diseases and disabilities than those who quit working altogether.

For some retirees, that rocking chair is fine, but if you need more and aren't sure of the next steps, consider talking to a counseling professional who can help you sort through the options and assist you in understanding your feelings and desires for that retirement future.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcorner@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcorner@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [counseling.org](http://counseling.org)*

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*The American Counseling Association is the nation's largest organization of counseling professionals with more than 53,000 members in all 50 states and 80 other countries.*