

Get There

When retiring, think about finding fun and worthy pursuits



By [Rodney Brooks](#) Columnist

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We spend so much time looking forward to the big day, we forget to figure out how we will fill our days in retirement.

Last time, I focused on keeping busy in retirement to save your marriage. Consider this Part Two on the subject. But this time I'll offer tips on how to stay busy in retirement and discuss the benefits of remaining active, such as staying mentally and physically healthy.

Andrew Ferraro, wealth adviser with Strategic Wealth Partners in Columbus, Ohio, says you should ask yourself three questions when you are ready to retire: "Do you have enough [savings]? Have you had enough of your job? And do you have something to retire to? That is the most overlooked thing when it comes to retiring."

Anne Tinyo, senior vice president at Wells Fargo Private Bank, says having too much free time in retirement can lead to boredom and ultimately depression. "You leave work and you lose a lot of those social ties when you leave," she says.

And networking expert and author George Fraser says you should take inventory of your skills. "If you're working 30 or 40 years, you've accrued some skills and some knowledge," he says. "Rather than drive your significant other crazy, take your skills and share them with other people."

So where to start with your planning? Here are a few ideas:

1. Keep working. This is certainly not an option for everyone. People may want to work for another 20 years, but it doesn't generally work out. Most don't leave their jobs voluntarily, but

because their jobs are downsized or they have health issues. In fact, according to a new Wells Fargo survey, 65 percent of workers say they will continue to work after retirement, but only 37 percent actually do.

And let's face it, some workers, especially blue-collar workers, can't wait to stop the daily grind. But if you can work and want to, a good place to start is the job you already have. It may be an option to stay in a reduced role.

"People who are doing what they love never want to retire," Fraser says. "All the great people I know died in the saddle."

2. Find a new career. "It takes a reframing of what you see as work," Ferraro says. "It is rare that people step out of their job and into a new job."

"Google 'second career' or 'encore career,'" Tinyo says. "You could be teaching a cooking class, mentoring children on study habits. Doing a little research is a good way to start."

Jeff Tennery, chief executive of the online company Moonlighting, says baby boomers in particular, even if they are forced to retire, have skills that can be used in other careers. And many need to keep working to avoid prematurely drawing from their retirement savings. His Web site matches people looking for freelance or consulting work — anything from writing or tutoring to dog-sitting — with potential employers.

3. Work for a charity or nonprofit. "Find a cause you believe in," Ferraro says. "It is a great way to have a meaningful impact. It is a great way to build a legacy."

"I knew I was going to have to keep busy," says Tom Henteleff, 72, of Bethesda, who retired from a Washington law firm where he was a partner. "I knew I wanted to retire at 70. I also knew in order to retire I had to be in a position that I could keep very busy. I've accomplished that." Henteleff volunteers at the Hebrew Home and serves on the boards of the Phillips Collection and an international think tank.

Ron Gunderson, a retiree in Ellicott City, Md., says there are lots of options at nonprofit organizations. "Financial background? I haven't worked with a nonprofit yet that isn't in need of a treasurer, or someone to read the financials correctly, or to fill out the IRS forms correctly to be recertified each year!

"Know how to market an idea or group? All non-profits are operating on a too-tight budget and would love to have a marketing plan and someone to lead fund-raising efforts."

4. Just have fun and enjoy life. Find something that piques your interest but you didn't spend any time on in your working years, Tinyo says: "There are book clubs, wine-tasting clubs. The club activities all have one thing in common, the social aspects — getting new friends." Henteleff has traveled with his wife across the United States, to Japan, the Black Sea, London, Florence, Paris and South America. He belongs to two book clubs and two retirement clubs. And he's written a novel. "Whether it's ever published is not important," he says. "It's been a lot of fun."

But let's not forget. Not everyone needs help with retirement. Some people are ready to move on from their jobs without even looking back.

A new survey from Fidelity Investments in collaboration with the Stanford Center on Longevity says traveling and pursuing hobbies were not the goals of many retirees. Of those surveyed, 72 percent said their top reason to retire was to have more leisure time — “the freedom and flexibility to do whatever they wanted, even if that was nothing more than relaxing.”

Greg Hammer of Hammer Financial Group in Lake County, Ind., says that has also been his experience. “We are blue-collar,” he says. “I don't think I've had a client come back and say, I'm bored with retirement. They are pretty much exhausted.”

Rodney A. Brooks writes about retirement and personal finance for The Washington Post. Rodney has had a long and distinguished career in financial journalism. He previously worked at USA Today from 1985 until his recent retirement.

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