

How To Avoid Misery In Retirement

You've spent years dreaming of your retirement: the things you'll do, the places you'll go, the things you'll see. So why now, after a year or more into retirement, do you feel vague, unfocused, unhappy, and perhaps even miserable? If this is you, you are not alone. In surveys of retirees, 40% say they were happier when they were working. The prime, underlying reason for retirement misery is that people need to feel a sense of purpose. Without it they wander around rudderless, and can eventually become miserable. How do we reinstitute a sense of purpose in retirement? Do we have to return to full-time work to feel useful? Not necessarily. You can find the answers by examining your own personality and experiences. Remember when you were asked to do something and you weren't sure you could do it? In the process of accomplishing this task (and it can be anything, not necessarily work), you lost all track of time. These timeless events have a connection to our core interests, which are the things we love to do, and to our styles, which are the way we love to do things. How close does your retirement life come to mirroring your interests and your style of pursuing those interests? The closer they come, the happier you will be. Your interests, remember, are what you like to do. For example, if you could run a world seminar and pick any experts you wanted, what subject would you choose? What would you and they talk about? Your style is how you like to do things. For example, you and your friend both love to work out at the gym, but for you this means joining an exercise or a yoga class, while your friend heads straight for the weight machines and plugs in her headphones. Your interests are the same -- working out -- but your styles differ. Further, you can also find your key motivators in your memories, the things which made particular events so satisfying and timeless. Were you using your intelligence creatively to solve a problem? Were you contributing to the good of mankind? Were you competing and coming out ahead? Did you lead a team to accomplish something that nobody thought possible? In the end, the closer your retirement lifestyle comes to echoing your key motivators, the more likely you are to feel that what you are doing is significant and worthwhile. If you find that you are really far away from the experiences which satisfied you in the past, then this is a pretty good indicator that the misery will continue. It is foolish to continue to do the same thing and expect different results. If your retirement has now passed the "vacation" stage, and you are feeling stale and restless, it may be time to reassess the lifestyle you've created for yourself. Since you created it, you can change it! Start by going back to your motivators. Look for places or situations where some of your key motivators can be utilized. Talk to people. Set up informational interviews. Find out what may be asked of you, or what you can ask of others. Don't forget to also use your style cues. Will you lead or can you happily follow? Do you wish to create or do you feel fulfilled in helping others achieve their dreams? The key is reassessment of your life in retirement. If it feels stale, use your imagination, and these psychological self-assessment tools, to find ways to revitalize and reorient your life. It's never too late. Think of it this way. As of today, you have 100% of the rest of your life left! Make the most of it.

About the Author

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