

10 Things You'll Love About Retirement



Retirement gives you control over how you spend your time. (Getty Images)

There is no doubt we face some issues when we retire. Our relationships change. We may sometimes have money problems or get bored and lonely. Some people fear that they will become irrelevant and feel aimless. That's why retirees should decide what is important to them, so they can plan their future and appreciate retirement for the exceptional opportunity that it really is.

It's no coincidence that studies have shown people tend to be happiest when they're in their 60s and 70s – when work responsibilities have been shed, the kids are grown up and everyday stress levels melt away like the spring snows. Of course, different people appreciate different aspects of retirement – and maybe you have some special ones of your own. Here are my favorite things about retirement.

1. We can go wherever we want, whenever we want. My wife and I fly mid-week. We drive during non-rush hours. We're free to go out to dinner at 5 p.m. if we want to. We can also stay out late because we don't have to get up for work the next morning. Personally, I'm not a big traveler. But plenty of retirees are, and they make bucket lists that include trips to the Grand Canyon, the Empire State Building, the Pyramids or the Great Wall of China.

2. We're free of our addiction to ambition. I spent a good portion of my working life competing with colleagues, pushing for a raise and angling for a promotion. It's the American way. But now I no longer care whether I get a better title or bigger office. A huge weight is lifted from your shoulders when you quit the rat race. It's the freedom that many retirees appreciate so

much: Freedom from the pressure to get ahead, to get your kid into college and to keep up with the neighbors.

3. I can still work part time. Just because you're retired doesn't mean you can't pick up a job here and there. I've done what a lot of people do, which is to carry over occasional assignments from my old company. Others parley their personal interests into a money-making gig or take a temporary job just for the fun of it.

4. We have time to catch up and keep current with the culture. You might have been too busy with a career and kids to follow some of the great directors like Alfred Hitchcock, Woody Allen or Robert Altman. Now you can go on Netflix or Amazon, or borrow DVDs from the library, and enjoy some of the great stories of our times. There's also time to watch current shows like "Happy Valley" or the new David Chappelle comedy special. Or you can fret about the latest news from the cable channels.

5. I joined a book club. My wife has belonged to a book club for years. Now I finally have the time to read a biography or a novel and sit around and talk about it. The latest book on my reading list is "News of the World" by Paulette Jiles. I'm getting ready for the next book club meeting at our senior center. If reading is not your thing, try playing bridge or pool, or going to an evening class.

6. We babysit our grandchildren. My wife and I just had our first grandchild, and we now have the opportunity to spend time with the next generation. We hope to get to know them and create some deep and lasting memories that will endure long after we are gone.

7. There's time to give back. To be honest, I didn't do much volunteering when I was working. I didn't coach Little League or belong to a civic club. But now I have found my niche as a volunteer tutor at our community college, and I find it enormously rewarding to share my knowledge and skills with young and sometimes disadvantaged kids who so obviously appreciate my efforts.

8. We have time to do nothing. Finally, there's time to enjoy the pleasures of sitting on the front porch or the back deck and soaking up the atmosphere, reflecting on your life and enjoying the cool breezes wafting through the trees.

9. I'm living my dream. Some people have a half-written novel in their study or a half-crafted piece of woodwork in the basement. Retirement gives you the time to write the rest of your story and perhaps even publish it online. You can complete the projects in your workshop, make jewelry or crochet sweaters and sell them on Etsy.

10. We do what we want, instead of what other people tell us to do. In retirement there are no more expectations. You don't have to please your parents or bear responsibility for your kids. You can move to the city, or the country. You can do something, or nothing. No matter how well-financed you may or may not be, you can live the lifestyle of the truly wealthy: You can do what you want and answer to nobody but yourself.

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