

The Psychology of Retirement

by Derek Milne

Derek Milne begins his story by focussing on the 'Surprises of Retirement' and a change in philosophy over the decades from an *"ending of a career to the beginning of a new chapter in one's life."* The improvement in western society's health has resulted in a longer life expectancy and has provided retirees with 15 to 20 years of 'quality living' before their quality of life truly begins to recede.

Milne points out that the transition to retirement is surprisingly hard to define due to 'retirees' continuing to work after their retirement date before easing into full retirement.

Of particular importance is his definition of those ingredients required for successfully coping with retirement. The acronym **RECIPE** for a successful retirement represents:

Resources (e.g. sufficient money)

Exercise

Coping Strategies

Intellectual Activity

Purpose

Engagement (e.g. social support)

Throughout the book, the author provides real-life case studies, both for successful retirements and for those that have been less than successful. By applying the **RECIPE** for success, he analyzes each case study which brings life to the stories and a focus on the keys for success.

Milne states that prior to retirement, members need to know who they are (what is important in retirement), their coping strategies (dealing with the stress of change and retirement), how to find purpose in retirement (new passions and pursuits) and their social support (creating new or redefining networks).

He asks the question, *"What does it mean to grow old successfully?"* This means different things to each of the readers, however being able to define what that means for *each of you* is important. One of the keys, however, is to ensure that you are looking after or attending to your health needs. Staying active, both physically and mentally, allow for retirees to move

through the various stages of retirement. He stresses the importance of 'coping' skills and quotes Darwin, *"It is not the strongest of species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one that is most responsive to change."* Retirees will go through various changes, and they need to be able to adapt to them in order to have a fulfilling retirement.

The author discusses the need to 'reframe' your lens of retirement, as some see it through 'rose-tinted glasses' others see the world with a 'half-empty' glass. He asks the question, *"Who do you think is most likely to have a successful retirement?"* While this unto itself does not mean that you will have a successful retirement, one's view of retirement needs to be defined and reframed in order for retirees to meet the challenges they could face.

Milne suggests that you need to be able to relate to your retirement. Who you once were in your previous working life will need to be re-created in your retirement life. Creating new networks for social emotional support are required, whether this is with a group of golf buddies, bridge players, or quilters, or even in developing a relationship with a pet. All of these things bring benefits to people so that they have a feeling of being connected and not isolated. Do not wait to be invited but rather reach out and create your own network in retirement.

In conclusion the author goes on to say that *"retirement is golden because for many it is the long-awaited opportunity to develop particular talents and interests free from the draining demands of work"*. He also states that, *"Happiness is not the absence of problems, but the ability to deal with them."*

Overall, I found this book to be engaging with sound points to consider for both pre- and post-retirement. I particularly enjoyed the real-life situations that demonstrated the key points of his **RECIPE** for a successful retirement. I would recommend this book to those who are looking ahead, and in the early phase of their retirement planning. • **DB**

How to Retire Happy, Wild and Free

by Ernie J. Zelinski

In the sequel to his first book on retirement entitled *The Joy of Not Working*, Zelinski delves deeper into the kind of life retirement can bring to people who embrace the opportunities that lay before them. As he states on the front cover, the book provides “*retirement wisdom that you won’t get from your financial advisor*”.

The author acknowledges that there are many guides to a good retirement that focus entirely on the need to plan financially, offering methods of how to do so, and measure a successful retirement based on achieving those financial goals. In his book, Zelinski focuses on the social, emotional, physical and spiritual planning for retirement, which he feels are more important than financial planning.

Zelinski goes into depth, helping a person to recognize when he or she is ready to retire. He cites researchers from Canada and the US who acknowledge the challenges individuals face as they enter retirement: knowing if the time is right, knowing what to do with their time, and learning how to embrace 'leisure' as a lifestyle. The overall message of the book is that retirement is the one opportunity in life to be exactly what you have always wanted to be. That requires getting to know your true self – the one who has not conformed to the expectations of a job or a particular lifestyle, but the real person inside. And once you know who you really are, you can do what will be fulfilling as a retiree.

Zelinski acknowledges that not all people are ready for retirement and shares ideas and options for those who might prefer to continue with part-time work or a different career after leaving their main one. He uses his own experiences as someone who retired early in life as an example of one kind of 'happy, wild and free' retiree. He also embeds stories from people who responded to his first book and took to heart his messages about embracing retirement. Their many letters about making bold decisions in their retirement to capitalize on this chapter of their lives add colour and fun to the book.

I would synthesize some of the key messages in the book to be:

- Retire as early as you possibly can.
- Make a plan for retirement! This could take a couple of years.
- Be involved in more than one leisure activity.
- Expand your social network.
- Take risks in retirement.
- Live without regret.

It is an easy read, and got me thinking about who I want to be in retirement, and what is really important. Given that our retirements may be as long as our working lives, it is good food for thought. • **ER**

Don Boyd & Ellen Roberts

Directors of Member Support Services, BCPVPA
put a laser focus on retirement reading



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Planning a Prosperous, Healthy and Happy Future
by John E. Nelson and Richard N. Bolles