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Navigating retirement



Thanks to longer lifespans, retirement isn't a short chapter. It might be close to a third of your life! It sounds so inviting: Life as a blank canvas. In fact, many retirees find that once the structure of work fades, they feel surprisingly unmoored. After decades of purpose-driven days, the stillness can feel disorienting. It is not uncommon for retirees to report feeling caught between relief and restlessness, and even some depression.

It helps, then, to reframe this life stage not as an end, but a beginning. Whether you're retiring solo or with a partner, take time to reflect not just on what has been left behind, but on what you'd like to step toward. Think about what excites you, what gives your life meaning, and what might bring new connections. Here are three common challenges to expect and thoughtful ways to approach them:

Loss of structure. Work shapes your days in many ways, subtle and specific. It likely determines when you rise, eat, and exercise, and ensures some contact with others.

Try this: Don't mindlessly fill your calendar, but do plan some activity to give your week a shape. Experiment: A daily walk? Mornings for a creative project? Wednesdays, lunch with a friend? Repeating simple rituals can create flow without the pressure of productivity.

Shifting identity. If your work has defined you, stepping away can lead to the question, *Who am I now?*

Try this: It may feel awkward at first to lack a secure focus or a solid answer to that perennial question, "What do you do?" Think about what's always mattered to you: science, art, nature, children—? Try mentoring, volunteering, exploring a passion project, or picking up something you once set aside. Seek what feels true to you *now*.

Social disconnection. The quiet can feel peaceful...until it feels lonely. Without workplace chatter and collaboration, the days can stretch. If you live with someone, you may need to find new ways of sharing that space.

Try this: Make an effort to build new social circles. Join a local organization that meets regularly. Return to a religious or spiritual practice. Take a class with your partner. We are wired for connection and creating a routine around it helps make sure it happens.

Research shows that purpose and a positive mindset toward aging support both emotional and physical health. Approach retirement with intention. The years ahead can be full of reinvention, connection, and fulfillment.

**Want help planning for the years ahead?
Give us a call at 206-456-5155.**



Aging Wisdom —
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Aging Well

206-456-5155

Aging Wisdom supports individuals and families in King and south Snohomish Counties as they plan for aging.



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