

## **Resilient Retirees: Retiring Happy by Remembering to Have Fun**

I thought I'd slide right into retirement and everything would fall into place.

What I found was that this retirement gig wasn't so easy for me!

I had gone from a 100 mile per hour pre – retirement lifestyle to 20 mph in a school zone. Building a retirement that I could be proud of was going to take intention and effort; I couldn't just drift into it. I talked with others who had recently retired, and noticed some patterns in the lives of those who were happy in retirement. I call them the 5Fs (Fun, For others, Fit, Flow, Financial) of a happy retirement.

I'll cover one of the ingredients of a happy retirement in each column in this series.

Ready for the first F?

Here it is.

The first F of a happy retirement is "Fun."

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Except that fun was missing from my own retirement. I sense that other boomers are struggling with the same thing.

Fun is what we think about when we daydream about retirement. We see ourselves stacking up one exciting event after another. Some retirees are pretty good at that. My father moved near a golf course so that he could walk on the course during down times, others immerse themselves with reading the classics, my neighbor created a beautiful front- yard garden so that others who didn't have time to create a beautiful garden could enjoy his.

You get the idea, plan fun events and enjoy. Make fun one of your intentions in retirement. Having fun generates a foundation of happiness, positive emotions



Retired counselor Kathy Rowe has a bit of advice about how to have fun in retirement. She has visited most of the baseball parks in the American League, walked on the Great Wall of China, and resumed her quilting hobby. This summer she plans to visit castles in Scotland. These endeavors are fun for Kathy; it makes me tired just thinking about it.

Kathy has two bits of advice about having fun in retirement.

First, create a bucket list of fun events. Daydream a bit and come up with some really fun things to do. Now's the time to tackle those things that you have always wanted to do. Make having fun intentional.

Kathy also suggests that we protect our time so that we make room for fun. Retiring baby boomers are more likely to experience Sandwich Stress (pulled between the demands of parents, adult children and grandchildren) than Empty Nest Stress. Make room for your fun events. Try not to allow a sense of obligation to others squeeze out all of your retirement fun.

You get the idea, fun is important, make room for it, but here's the catch, fun isn't enough. It is only one ingredient of a happy retirement.

We get used to most things in life and having fun is no exception.

Psychologists call this adaptation. The happiness bar raises; to stay happy we need to keep finding other things that keep us happy. We find ourselves on a happiness treadmill. Fun is essential and it is just one of five elements of a happy retirement.

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