

Resilient Retirees: Retiring Happy by Staying Fit

Last month, I wrote that my first crack at retirement wasn't very successful; I turned it around by learning from others who were happy in their retirement. I noticed that happy retirees seemed to follow similar patterns that I call the 5Fs (Fun, For others, Fit, Flow, Financial) of a happy retirement. This column I will focus on Fit, the third F of a Happy Retirement.

Why stay fit in retirement?

Two reasons.

First, Retirement is not stress free.

Leaving a career behind does not guarantee that we will be less stressed. Boomers are particularly susceptible to sandwich stress that occurs when we are caught between the demands of aging parents and the needs of children.

If we keep retirement stress turned on all of the time we experience wear and tear on the body. It is like we are driving a car that is idling too fast; pretty soon it will catch up with us.

Second, we also want to make sure that we don't stagnate, and have our bucket lists narrowed simply because we cannot physically navigate all the fun things we want to do.

When we stay fit we make sure that we have the energy to engage in all of the activities that we dreamed about in retirement.

How do we make sure that we are fit in retirement?

Try a form of exercise that you enjoy.

I really enjoy physical exercise; it is a great stress zapper for me. The side benefit to exercise is that it has introduced me to a circle of exercise friends. We see each other at the gym where I work out, hold each other accountable, bounce ideas around; have a few laughs. Sometimes we will work out, then eat breakfast together, a great way to begin the day. One I get up and get moving things brighten up for me. I notice that my outlook changes and I am more in sync with the world.

One of my workout buddies is Fritz Goss.

Collegiate athlete, Navy veteran, and National Judo Champion, he began his educational career as a middle school teacher and later became a school counselor, a position from which he retired. Along the way he coached several sports and kept his martial arts skills sharp by offering private lessons. After his retirement, Fritz put his people skills and massive energy to work with his next endeavor, a financial planning business that he built and nurtured for 10 years.



Fritz is a physical guy who likes to move around and stay in shape. He carries the same weight now that he did when he graduated from high school. We challenge each other when we work out together; it is a great stress reliever for us. It also gives us a chance to talk through challenges that we may be facing.

Want to stay fit in your retirement?

Clear it with your doctor, and then try walking, jogging, and running, swimming, kayak, biking. If you like variety, mix it up by alternating activities. Just get moving and keep moving. Work off those stress responses and build up your general level of fitness so that you can enjoy all of your retirement activities.

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