



Five Questions to Ask As You Consider Retiring

Normal retirement age used to be 65, but things are way different today

You might be thinking about retiring, but how do you know when you are really ready for it, mentally and financially? For decades, the normal retirement age was 65. This was when you became eligible for Social Security and Medicare. But things are different today.

Answer these five questions to find out how, when and if you should retire:

How do you replace the relationships you have at work? When you retire, those you hang out with while working may disappear from your life. This isn't a good or bad thing, it just is. When you're off the radar screen of others, they often forget to call. Before long that forgetfulness becomes an embarrassment.

When that happens, it's just easier to let you fall away. Will you make the effort to try new activities where you can meet others, and plan activities to maintain your existing relationships?

Can you afford it? Do you know how much you need for living expenses when you retire? Where does your monthly retirement income come from? Is it enough? If you're concerned about whether you can afford to retire, you might also want to think about work in retirement, probably a part-time job that matches your interest.

What do you depend on? There's a very good chance you have 25 or 30 years of life ahead of you. You might not be able to work when you are older and less healthy. That means you need savings to help you get through those years. Do you have an emergency plan? Do you have the money to pay for huge medical bills and health-care expenses?

Do you even want to retire? Before taking the leap, make sure you don't have seller's remorse – when you get rid of something, you want it again. Spend some time thinking about whether retirement is right for you. In my case, I have no interest in leaving my job now. I love what I do, and I've arranged my work so that almost everything I do is a lot of fun. If you work for yourself you can do that too.

What to do with all that free time? Many people retire only to find that they're bored. You might want to think about what you always want to do but either couldn't afford it, or didn't have the time.

I always believe that once we reach our adult years, we have at least three careers in us. The first is a learning career. The second is when you get to apply what you learned. The third career is something that you want to do just for fun. Do you have your just-for-fun ideas lined up?