

How to Retire Single Without Being Isolated

5 tips for the unmarried on forging new connections after work

By [Patricia Corrigan](#) | August 3, 2015 | [Health](#)

Retired couples can encourage each other to do new things, go new places and meet new people. Retired single people must make those efforts on their own.

“In a world that seems organized for couples, if you don’t think about how to construct a social life after retirement, you could end up sitting on your couch,” said Carol, 66, a widow in Berkeley, Calif.

We asked single retirees about the challenges of retirement and what advice they have for others to help make the most of this new beginning. They came up with five smart suggestions:

1. Make a List of Goals

Before Carol left her job in 2013 as CEO of a private nonprofit educational research organization, she assessed her situation in the following areas:

- financial status
- physical health
- intellectual needs
- spiritual needs
- relationships
- community

“Everyone’s first concern is money, but community is a big thing,” Carol said. “After you leave work — where you’re connected over a common goal — you don’t have a ready-made community. I thought about what resources I did have and what would bring me joy, and I made a list of goals.”

First, Carol moved from Portland, Ore., to be closer to her family. Then, she began building a network of friends. Today she takes photography classes, participates in two photo clubs, works with The League of Women Voters and looks for opportunities for group travel.

“My biggest fear — loneliness — was unfounded,” Carol said. “I’m not lonely.”

2. Know That ‘It’s All OK’

Maxine, who is divorced, had not planned to retire at 62, but when she got an offer to buy the four nursing homes she owned in the Midwest, she took it. That was nine years ago.

“I had pictured retirement as freedom from responsibility, and I looked forward to that,” Maxine said. “But when you’ve been in a position of authority, it’s hard to leave. If you’re not in the game anymore, what is your game?”

Maxine turned to her longtime interests to fill her days. She became certified as a Master Gardener. A past president of the Missouri Mycological Society, she wrote a book on mushrooms for the Missouri Department of Conservation. And she gave public talks about the book.

Out of the limelight now, Maxine’s pace has changed. “I don’t need a lot of projects, but if you’re a go-getter, that’s OK. It’s also OK to spend days at home, reading. It’s all OK,” Maxine said. “It’s tough being retired. You have to choose between fun and fun.”

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Maxine said she has eased into a nice rhythm, going to the gym every day, traveling with family and taking walks in the woods. “You have to create a life for yourself, get out and find like-minded people,” she said. “I don't have a need for a partner; my life is full. And if I want popcorn for supper, I can have it.”

3. Regard Challenges as ‘Part of the Fun’

After decades on the job, Laura, 62, wants to watch birds in southwestern Mexico — and she is making that happen.

Laura retired in 2014 from a career in art conservation at several museums and as a consultant. Recently, she moved to Oaxaca. “I love Mexico and have visited over the years, and I wanted to try living here,” Laura said.

Never married, Laura noted the decision to move to Mexico was easy. “I sold my house and car and most of my furniture, and came down here with two suitcases,” Laura said. “There is a nice group of expats and lots to do, but you do have to put yourself out there and get engaged in something in order to meet people.”

Laura volunteers at the local library. She plans to take Spanish classes, do some bird watching in the mountains and travel in Mexico and Central and South America.

So far, her bold move has lived up to her expectations in every way. “I'm learning new customs and a new language,” she said, “and the challenges are part of the fun.”

4. Admit That Time Is Not on Our Side

George, 66, spent his entire career in one place — until the day eight years ago he decided to retire.

“The decision to leave my job as assistant director of a large county library system was a quick one, and I hadn’t thought a lot about retirement,” George said. “When I did think about it, I imagined my life would not change much. I have lived by myself since 1973 and the idea of a lot more time at home was not frightening.”

What has changed is that George does not spend all his time at home in St. Louis, Mo. For eight years, he has enjoyed a long-distance relationship with a man in another city. “Being retired means I am free to travel often, to spend time with Nathan,” he said.

At home, George sings in his church choir, serves on the board member of the St. Louis Chamber Chorus, plays bridge, takes part in a writing group and spends time with family. He also volunteers as part of a special project at The Muny, an outdoor theater nearing its 100th anniversary.

George stays active for two important reasons. “I know people — especially men — who withered away after they left work,” he said. “If leaving your job is going to leave a huge hole in your life, start filling it before you retire.”

Another motivating factor is the passage of time. “I realize every day I am on the downhill slope, well past the halfway mark of my life,” George said. “Now I choose to be happy. There is no point in being regretful about the past.”

5. ‘Find Something You Like to Do’

Jeanette, 59, retired five years ago from teaching middle school. A widow, she spends part of her time substitute teaching and part of her time enjoying old friends and making new friends, especially people who like to walk, hike or bike.

“When all my body parts are working, I want to be outside, be active,” Jeanette said. “I’ve never been a sit-on-the-couch person, so I’ll go to an art exhibit or concert, and if someone else asks me to go somewhere, I go.”

She also devotes time to friends in need. “When I had surgery, so many people looked in on me and now I can do that for others,” she said. “As we age, people have doctor appointments, and someone needs to take them or maybe drop off some lunch.”

Jeanette also recommends volunteering, even once a week. “Read to little kids, work at the food pantry. Do something for somebody else. I was raised this way — this is what people do,” she said.

“Just find something you like to do, and find a way to do it. It’s survival.”



Patricia Corrigan is a professional journalist, with decades of experience as a reporter and columnist at a metropolitan daily newspaper, and a book author. She now enjoys a lively freelance career, writing for numerous print and on-line publications. Read more from Patricia at latetothehaight.blogspot.com. [Read More](#)

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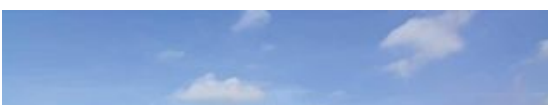
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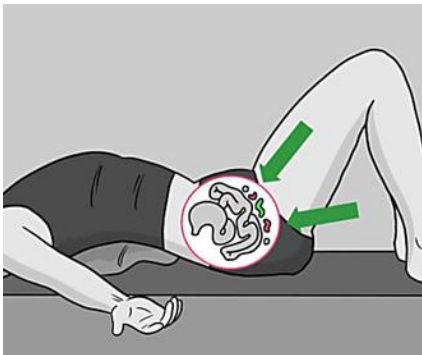
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