



ENJOY A HEALTHY, REWARDING RETIREMENT

A rewarding retirement takes planning and adjustment in all spheres, psychological, social, physical and financial. When retirement arrives, it comes with a lot of emotions and expectations. While initially it is exciting there is usually a period of change and adjustment that can be challenging while you adjust to your new lifestyle.

Learn:

- To get organized in your new way of life.
- Ways to productively fill the extra free hours in your life.
- To adjust to your family's ongoing routines and habits.
- That a spouse has developed routines they may wish to continue.
- That life is not regimented or constantly dangerous.

Retirement from a correctional career creates change and opportunity as you are retiring. Coming from a very stressful and regimented work environment. You will be easing into a free and open environment that is far different. Hopefully this booklet will give some helpful thoughts and ideas to aid with this adjustment.

MANAGE STRESS

As in other aspects of life, stress can be present in retirement. In early retirement stress comes from change. Change creates uncertainty as we wrestle with the unknowns that transitioning from work life to retirement presents.

Stress contributes to cardiac illness, emotional disturbance and marital instability. After working in a prison for many years you likely have endured higher than average levels of tension producing hormones which contribute to heart disease. Beside the physical effect, there are behavioral urges to be aware of because of this tension. These can lead to overly aggressive responses to problems. On the other hand, there may be avoidance of sensitive issues. The impact of such behaviors on family and friends creates tension.

When life changes from working in a prison the level of stress can go down. However, because of habit from many years working in a high stress environment change may not come easily. Managing stress will help you positively impact heart health, emotional health and family life.

SOME WAYS TO LOWER STRESS

- Develop an exercise routine and schedule.
- Participate in vigorous exercise group activities.
- Find a sport you can play with others (bowling, golf, fishing, hiking, biking, kayaking etc.)
- Join groups for challenges like Geocaching, obstacle courses, orienteering.
- Travel
- Start a small business
- Go back to school
- Learn a new language, learn sign language
- Learn to dance
- Learn a musical instrument, if you already play form a band
- Buy a metal detector and do some treasure hunting
- Learn a new hobby, photography, crafting, gardening, wood working, antiquing, draw, paint, write a book, join a book club
- Track down your ancestry
- Become a mentor, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, church groups can use good people
- Volunteer, there are so many organizations that can use a helping hand
- Take classes in Meditation, relaxation techniques, stress management, yoga, Tai Chi
- Work out relationship issues with spouses or important people in your life
- Seek counseling for stress and anxiety issues



ATTITUDES THAT CAN AFFECT HEALTHY ADJUSTMENT

Two of the more prominent come from the relationship to the job.

1. Some officers can't wait to retire just because they know they have earned this benefit and they want to go forward with a new chapter in life. This group can focus on pursuing a new lifestyle without the burden of the memory of their previous occupation. Exploring and testing out new ideas, interests and social interactions will help these officers find a sense of happiness and contentment.
2. Another group also can't wait to retire. However, they want out! They are bitter, angry and unhappy. This group is often burdened with bitterness, cynicism, and overall negativity that will interfere with their new circumstance with family and enjoyment of new activities. Learning to put the past behind them and learning to live in the moment is very important for these individuals. These officers may benefit from stress or anger management groups or counseling with qualified mental health professionals.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Stating the obvious, finances are very important in retirement. Economic security can greatly impact your retirement and planning for this eventuality should begin when you start your career. Typically, there will be changes in your income and your lifestyle will need adjustment. Carefully analyzing your income and needs. You can make plans for your new reality and living arrangement.

Prior to retirement, it is wise to seek out a financial planner through your union, employee association or pension manager. Once you have had time to adjust to your lifestyle you will learn what strengths and weaknesses your income stream has and be able to adjust accordingly.

You might consider a part time job that can help supplement your income stream such as limo driver, security officer, dog walker among others. You may have several skills sets that can be put to good use in a part-time endeavor.



ATTITUDES TO LEAVE BEHIND

Some beliefs and behaviors are no longer necessary or important outside the Wall.

YOU ARE NO LONGER IN A POSITION OF AUTHORITY.

- Your obligation to protect or intervene is past.
- You are no longer legally protected by your employer for your actions.
- You have many years of being on guard for emergencies, but you no longer have obligation or authority to intervene in disturbances.

EXCESSIVE WORRIES ABOUT SAFETY

After years of having to watch for personal danger in a high-risk environment it may take some time and frequent self-reminders that the world is not a prison and most of the people you will meet in a day are not dangerous. The joke that officers never sit with their back to the door is a metaphor for being hyperaware. It is no longer required, nor is it healthy!

AUTHORITARIAN TOP-DOWN INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS

Life outside a prison is significantly less rigid. Mostly, interactions are cooperative. In many types of jobs bosses can be flexible and respectful. In contrast in prison there is not the luxury of flexibility in rules and policies. You no longer have to be rigid or overly controlling with those whom you interact. You are retired and no longer behind the walls, family and friends are not inmates.

CORRECTIONS IS ONLY A JOB

We all get identity and self-image from the work we do. It is difficult after many years to see ourselves as more than the person who does a particular job. Our job is only a part of who we are. In addition to our work identity, we are spouses, parents, neighbors, friends, buddies. We have many interests and skills that make corrections only a smaller part of our personality. We can begin to see ourselves as friends, colleagues, and partners.

GET CONNECTED

By and large human beings are socially inclined. We like to be with others. We need others to have fun with and for support when things are difficult. When we leave corrections, we have an opportunity to expand our social circle. There is a vast world filled with people who have diverse interests. It can be exciting, interesting and rewarding to explore these many diverse ways of interacting in the world.



SOME WAYS TO EXPAND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Connect with a broader group with diverse interests - *GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE* because of work to develop friends and acquaintances within your occupational field. Law enforcement groups don't have to be the only groups to associate with. Such a narrow focus creates limited stimulation and a very limited view of the broader community. Try beginning to connect with people from outside your previous occupation. You will gain new understanding, friendship and growth. There are many ways to connect but you will most likely need to be the one who reaches out. This is a process that takes time and effort on your part but it will be rewarding.

By using social media you can connect with groups that share your interests. There are many people that communicate online and meet up to participate in group activities like hiking, bird watching, canoeing, mountain biking.

If you want to talk about corrections, meet periodically with old friends from work but not always.

MAKE FRIENDS BY JOINING:

- Rod and gun clubs
- Church groups
- Get a part time job
- Volunteer for organizations or churches in need
- Sports groups (such as a pickup basketball game at the YMCA, a hiking group or a disc golf group)
- Get politically active in your town, city or state
- Join your library
- Help out at a food pantry
- Take a course with others
- Learn a skill in a group (photography club, drone club,)
- Join a CrossFit group
- Travel

The benefits of socializing can't be emphasized enough. In cultures where people live very long lives studies have shown that socializing is extremely important. The people who socialize outlive those who don't.



COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARTNER OR SPOUSE

You may be excited about the prospect of more time together, however, remember your partner has developed routines while you were working.

- Avoid smothering or over-reliance on your partner to fill your time.
- Communicate your wishes and expectations but listen to your partner's wishes and expectations.
- Develop outside hobbies interests for yourself.
- Don't expect to do everything together all the time. Respect your partners wishes to continue their social connections.
- Respect your partner's interests and life goals.
- Renew old interests together or explore new interests that you both can enjoy.

There may be negatives beyond your control. Ill family members may demand your time. This can be stressful. At this stage of life you may be asked to be a caregiver for a loved one. This can be stressful so don't hesitate to join support groups or ask for help. Sadly, this is a time of life where there will be changes and losses. Reach out for help when you need it.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN

Taking a class is a great way to expand your mind, your skills and a way to meet others. There are two benefits of the taking classes. One is you meet people if you go to a classroom rather than an online class. The other is you get to meet people as you use your new skill. The outcome of the class may be something others will appreciate, and you can take your newfound skill or knowledge to show, help or sell to others.

PHYSICAL CARE

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY

A high stress job like that of a corrections officer can have long term negative effects on health. Research indicates corrections officers have a shortened life span. Heart health, and gastrointestinal health as well as unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, misuse of alcohol and other substances, are possible results of extreme prolonged stress. With effort and attention, you can lessen the likelihood of an abbreviated life.

It is never too late to change your behavior and it is important that you initiate or continue healthy behaviors that will contribute to a longer life. Length of life is not sufficient. A healthy long life gives a chance for a more positive and enjoyable retirement.



HEALTHY WAYS TO EXERCISE

The mental and physical benefits of exercise are enormous for health and emotional well being. Besides living longer, living healthy gives you physical and emotional energy to enjoy family, friends and activities. Numerous studies show the benefits of exercise for relieving stress and for improving physical health. Improved heart health, improved balance and strengthened muscles help provide physical benefits for improved endurance. There are many activities that can help improve physical health. Some are: Tai Chi, Yoga, Meditation and Exercise (join a gym, run, cycle, swim, walk, strength training).

BE MODERATE WITH ALCOHOL OR OTHER SUBSTANCES

Work provides structure and commitment of work which limits how we may use alcohol. We may drink or use other substances more often and less moderately than we did while working. In retirement until you get an organized routine alcohol or drug use can become excessive and out of control if you are prone to excess, endangering aspects of good health and quality of life. Additionally, excessive use of alcohol or drugs can negatively impact finances and relationships. If it seems alcohol is getting out of control consider help from an addictions counselor.

ELIMINATE SMOKING

There is probably nothing more important that you can do to improve your heart and lung health than to stop smoking. Tobacco is an addictive substance so it's not easy to quit. Fortunately, there have been significant advances for helping you to quit. Speak to your physician for medications that can help stop cravings or withdrawal.

PAY ATTENTION TO DIET

An important goal for physical health is to minimize risk of debilitating illness or death. It is easy to take our food for granted. However unhealthy eating can have many negative consequences such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure, or premature death. Look for books or articles on low fat diets, such as the Mediterranean Diet, for help creating a heart healthy regimen in your eating plans. Avoid fast foods and foods with no nutritional value. If your health plan allows seek a consult with a certified nutritionist to develop a diet tailored for your needs and a long healthy life.

CONCLUSION

Beginning a new phase of life is an adventure full of change. It can be exciting, enjoyable and a challenge. It is inevitable in all our lives. Embrace it and enjoy it. If you have difficulties with it please seek help so that you can make this time you have earned productive and happy.