Filling your retirement with meaningful activities

Although we may have dreamed of retirement when we were younger, the actual move into this stage of life brings challenges for today's elders. Many of us are physically and mentally fitter than any previous generation of retirees and are eager to actively contribute to society.



Fortunately, retirement in today's society doesn't have to mean retirement from life. Take a little time assessing your wishes and needs, and search for resources and activities that fit your new lifestyle. This is your time, so make it a great time.

Reflect on the interests or occupations that have always interested you. Make time for old interests and friends, but also be sure to consider new directions, activities and learning opportunities that are challenging but manageable. Here are some tips to help you get started:

Conduct a self-assessment

Before you decide how you want to spend your retirement, ask yourself some questions to discover where your interests lie. Consider:

- Do you want to continue to work in some capacity?
- Would you like go back to school to learn new skills or study old interests?
- Do you have interests or hobbies from the past that you had to give up due to lack of time?
- Would volunteer work embrace some of your interests?
- Do you enjoy outdoor activities such as golf, gardening, walking, sports or nature?
- Do you enjoy indoor activities such as bridge, reading, crafts, chess, cooking, carpentry or creative pursuits?
- Do you enjoy social activities? Indoors or out?
- Do you want to travel?
- Do you enjoy arts, music and culture?
- Would you like to get involved in amateur dramatics? On stage or behind the scenes?
- Would you like to play a musical instrument? Take singing classes?
- Do you already belong to religious or social organizations? Would you like to get more involved in them?
- Would you like to teach other people about your interests or skills? Paid or volunteer?

Getting involved

Many communities offer ways for elders to get involved in the area they live in. Here are some places you can contact for job, volunteer and activity openings:

- Check your library, community centre and local paper for information about local clubs and volunteer associations.

- Surf online and find websites for people with your interests. If you don't have Internet access at home, use a computer at your library.

- Check out the classes available at local community colleges.

Becoming a retired member in your community doesn't mean you no longer have a role to play. Most municipalities offer a number of activities and resources for elders in their community. Contact your local municipal office for more information.