

## Latest News

# Now that you're retiring, exercise your brain

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Studies show the most dramatic loss in the brain's processing speed occurs after retirement. This may lead to foggy thinking, forgetfulness, or calling basic items 'whatchamacallit' in place of their common names. The good news is, it doesn't have to. In fact, retirement can bring with it the opportunity to hone your mind and your health.

It's the time of year when many are formally retiring from a lifelong career. This leaves once fully packed schedules free of obligation and the chance to choose how to invest one's time. When it comes to our health, there can be a great return on investment from making the right choices during this transition. Health is more than simply the absence of disease.



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In this photo provided by CBS, David Letterman, the 67-year-old host of the 'Late Show with David Letterman,' waves to the audience in New York after announcing that he will retire in 2015. He'd be well-advised to have a retirement plan before leaving his job.

instead. Because of this, many dive into projects or commitments that leave them feeling busy, but burned out, nonetheless. Retirement, like health, is a marathon, not a sprint. It's wise to take time to uncover your goals, train for them and then adapt them along the way.

Step 3. Do what you love. Then love something new: Now is the perfect time to revisit that hobby or dream you've been holding close for so long. The best part is, not only does engaging in activities you enjoy boost your vitality and your endorphins, it's contagious. Enjoying yourself may inspire others to do the same.

Beyond this, taking part in new activities trains the brain. Whether learning a new language, golfing, dancing, knitting or playing bridge, keep challenging yourself to tackle what you've always wanted to. And don't limit yourself to sudoku and crosswords. A diverse array of activities will activate different parts of your brain, strengthening neural synapses. Your brain will thank you for it, and so will your spouse, when you finally remember your anniversary.

Are you feeling like retirement is far off? All hope is not lost. This means you have the chance to focus on retiring one or two key habits in favour of some better ones. Just remember conditions do not have to be perfect to start moving forward, as long as your personal health goal is your own.

In fact, that's how the World Health Organization defines it, and how I do, too. Health is a positive vitality, and moves beyond managing prescriptions, supplements and nutrition to treating the person in their unique season of life. With that said, it's also easier said than done. So where do you start?

These steps can keep you on track even though you're off the payroll. There's a new boss in charge — and it's your best boss ever:

Step 1. Develop your definition of retirement. When you look back on your career, you might describe it in terms of your title and job description. Come retirement, you can now write your own job description of what your retired life will look like. This may be spending more time with your family, engaging in that hobby you've never had time for, or tackling a new health goal.

Just as each person's definition of optimal health is different, so will be their goals for retirement. Regardless of what the Jones's have in mind, it's your time to shine. You've earned it. And now it's up to you.

Step 2. Warm up before diving in: When it comes to new health goals, for example it's OK to start small. Every step forward is a step in the right direction, whether it's toward walking 10,000 steps a day, gaining better control over diabetes or hypertension or building your brain fitness and reducing the risk of dementia.

Remember, you can feel grateful for your extra time, not guilty.

Many of my patients have trouble relaxing. The very thought of the word 'relax' brings them angst, as they know their mind will be racing with thoughts of the past and what was done wrong, or thoughts of the future or what they should be doing

Instead of sailing into the sunset, you'll be soaring to new heights, with a focus as sharp of the swallow-tailed kite. After all, you're a rare breed, and retirement is meant to be special.

Tara Maltman-Just is the executive clinician and licensed pharmacist at Vitality Integrative Medicine in Winnipeg. [www.vitalityintegrativemedicine.com](http://www.vitalityintegrativemedicine.com)

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