

# *Disability Campaign.org*

## How to Prevent Depression in Retirement



Image: IQuantifi.com

Retirement can bring many exciting opportunities such as more family time, vacations, new hobbies, downtime and much more. But not everyone experiences retirement the same. For some people entering retirement, this new stage of life can lead to feelings of depression and loss. The *Institute of Economic Affairs* reports “retirement can increase your risk of clinical depression by 40%.”<sup>1</sup> And though not every retiree is diagnosed with clinical depression, many retirees experience some degree of fear associated with aging, the loss of income and changes in family dynamics. With all the new life changes brought by retirement, depression can come upon you quickly. So, how can you minimize your risk of depression and maintain emotional and mental wellbeing as you transition into retirement? Below are some recommendations to help you enter this new stage of life.

- 1. Pick up a new hobby.** Do something you've always wanted to do, but never had the time for it. Perhaps you've always wanted to learn guitar or ballroom dancing. Consider starting a collection or a book club. No matter what interests you, start something new and make it a regular activity or hobby. You never know where it could take you.
- 2. Spend time with family.** When you had a full time job, it was more difficult to spend time with your family. More than likely, most of your family has moved away. This is the perfect time for you to travel and see them. Spending time with relatives could help you feel less depressed and alone.
- 3. Volunteer.** Volunteering is a great way for you to get involved and make a difference. Food banks, hospitals, libraries, schools, parks and local nonprofits always need volunteers and would love your help. Consider contacting organizations, such as [VolunteerMatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org), dedicated to helping you find the perfect volunteer opportunity for you in your community.
- 4. Join a Retirement Community.** A lot of communities have a local retirement club. Connecting with others around you will keep you engaged and help you foster positive relationships. This is a wonderful way to get involved with events in your community with others your age or with people who share your interests and are also navigating retirement.
- 5. Work part-time.** Working part time would give you a chance to get out of the house and have a little extra income. Because you are probably used to working, having a schedule, receiving a paycheck and working with others may ease the transition. Besides, this will give you a chance to interact with a variety of people.



Image: Halton Hills Public Library

**6. Go back to school.** It's never too late to go back to school. Since most of your life has probably been dedicated to your family or career, you may have never obtained the degree that you wanted. This is the perfect time to go back to school. But you don't have to take classes for a degree; you can also enroll in a course for fun. Community colleges offer classes like pottery, mechanics or history that may suit your interests; you may even consider auditing a course or starting out with a summer class. This will keep your mind sharp and help with memory retention.

**7. Stay Active.** The Hebrew University Medical Center and Hebrew University Hadassah Medical School reported that seniors who do any amount of exercise appear to live longer and have a lower risk of disability.<sup>2</sup> It's vital that you remain active when you reach retirement. It will be very easy to just lounge around the house,



Image: HittingTheGreen.com

but fight the urge. There are many gyms that offer discounts and programs for seniors. In addition, community centers sometimes offer senior group exercise classes. Some groups will not only exercise together, but will also go on tours and trips that will help you stay active as well.

**8. Travel.** Traveling can be difficult to do when you have a lot going on. If you have the financial resources, time and health, consider traveling to a place you've always wanted to visit. The majority of hotels and rental cars offer discounts for seniors. Actually, you don't even have to travel that far. Explore a city near you or visit a museum or national park close to your home. You can even travel with others to have company as you explore new places.

Retirement can be a great time in life, but for some it can bring forth new challenges — even depression. If you are experiencing persistent sadness, lack of sleep, loss of appetite, loss of energy, feelings of guilt and/or thoughts of death or suicide, contact your physician to discuss your symptoms. He or she may give you further information about medications, counselors, and therapists who can help you as you navigate this new season of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Sahlgren, G. H. (May 2013). Work Longer, Live Healthier. Institute of Economic Affairs, Discussion Paper No. 46, 7. Retrieved from [http://www.iea.org.uk/sites/default/files/in-the-media/files/Work%20Longer,%20Live\\_Healthier.pdf](http://www.iea.org.uk/sites/default/files/in-the-media/files/Work%20Longer,%20Live_Healthier.pdf). - See more at: <http://reffor.us/index.php#sthash.eAWm2WSv.dpuf>

<sup>2</sup> Stessman J, Hammerman-Rozenberg R, Cohen A, Ein-Mor E, Jacobs JM. Physical Activity, Function, and Longevity Among the Very Old. *Arch Intern Med*. 2009;169(16):1476-1483. doi:10.1001/archinternmed.2009.248.