The Debt Bomb Is Ticking...

How To Plan Your Retirement

E-BOOK PUBLISHED BY GoldIRAForInvestors.com

- ✓ Protect you and your family
- ✓ A smart way to maximize your savings in a uncertain economic climate
- ✓ Avoid the pitfalls of this industry
- ✓ Solutions to your biggest financial dilemmas.

By Steve Smith

This guide tries to shed some light on the subject of retirement. We have covered lots of worries and questions that we are asked frequently.

The question that we are most frequently asked is how you can hedge your retirement against this current global economic turmoil. The answer from us is always the same.

The best and safest financial vehicle you can use to retire comfortably and secure your money is choosing a precious metals IRA company.

Because this is a very specific matter we have dedicated an entire online page to this aspect.

This information is top-notch and it has just been released from inside our gold mastermind and coaching program.

I highly encourage you to go to http://goldiraforinvestors.com/ to discover how to choose the right precious metals IRA company with our free online research report.

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To your success,

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Forced Into Retirement? What You Should Do

Did you love your job? If so, you may have been happy with your life. That is until your supervisors explained that your company was cutting costs. Due to those cost cutting measures, you are being forced into early retirement. If you are like many other individuals in your shoes, panic may be the first feeling that sets it. Yes, being forced into early retirement may seem like "the end of the world," but it doesn't have to be.

When being forced into early retirement, you will be required to sign a number of important documents. Never agree to retirement without first learning about your company's rules, restrictions, and attached strings. Will you receive a severance package? Does that severance package eliminate your pension or eliminate you from receiving any other important employee benefits? If so, talk to a financial advisor right away, particularly before you sign anything. Determine what your best course of action is. Is it better to take the severance pay or receive all of your benefits?

Speaking of talking to a financial advisor, you should take this step anyways. Early retirement can throw a wrench into your plans. You may need professional assistance to get those plans fixed and back on track. A financial advisor can examine your retirement wants and needs, determining an estimated figure that you need to comfortably retire. Next, a financial advisor can help you come up with a plan of action to get those needed funds.

In the event that you opt for a severance package, do not spend that money right away. Unfortunately, many forced into retirement make this mistake. If you are living day-to-day, use your money to pay for your necessities, such as food and shelter, but nothing else. If you have "extra," money, deposit it into a savings account or an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). Doing so may increase your money, based on interest rates and tax benefits.

It is also important to remember that social security benefits come with rules and restrictions. Just because you are forced to retire early, it doesn't mean that you qualify to receive social security yet. That is why you are encouraged to take action and right away. Should you qualify for early social security benefits, due to your age, know that the amount you receive overtime may be smaller than what you intended to live on.

Most importantly, remember that being forced into early retirement doesn't necessarily mean that you have to stop working. If you are asked to retire a few years earlier than planned, you may be unable to do so financially. Will your money run out too soon? If so, working may be your only option.

Before leaving your current job and accepting your company's early retirement package, examine your health insurance. Regardless of your age, you should never be left without health insurance. Depending on your age and your financial standing, you may qualify for Medicare or Medicaid. However, do not leave your job without knowing. COBRA will leave you protected for 18 months, but you should have another plan. If you start working again, you may be able to get health insurance coverage through your new employer after 90 days.

If you haven't been forced into retirement, it is an event that you should still plan for. Many companies are finding themselves losing money. For that reason, they are offering early retirement packages to many of their long-term workers, particularly those that are close to the retirement age. With that in mind, just because you are close to the retirement age, it doesn't mean that you are ready for it. Even if you are only twenty or thirty years old, please know there is a chance you could be forced into early retirement down the road. That is why it is imperative that you start saving for retirement now, as you never know what the future holds.

How to Find Retirement Communities

Are you planning for your retirement? If you are expected to retire within the next year or two, you may be on the hunt for retirement communities. With so many options to choose from, many seniors are wondering, how they can start familiarizing themselves with their options.

The first step in finding a retirement community is to decide on a location. Do you want to stay in your current community? Have you always dreamed of moving to Florida or another location with beautiful weather? If so, now is the time to make your decision. Targeting your retirement community search to a specific location can save you time.

Once you have decided on a destination, you have a number of different options. If you will be staying in or around your local community, you can turn to your local phone book. There, you will find a number of retirement communities located in the yellow pages or business directory section. These centers may be listed under "retirement," "housing," or "assisted living." Your phone book should provide you with the telephone number of the establishment in question. Contact them for more information.

If you are internet savvy, you can use the internet to find retirement communities. If you already have the name of a retirement home or community, like one that was recommended to you, perform a standard internet search with that company or community name. If the place has an online website, you should be directed to that website. Not only can you get the needed contact information, you will also be provided with other valuable information. This information may include a summary of rates, pictures, room layout plans, a detailed list of onsite services, facilities, and scheduled activities.

In keeping with using the internet to find retirement homes and communities, you can also turn to online business directories and online phone books. Many enable you to search for a business, like a retirement home, by location, such as your chosen destination. The information that you will be provided with should include an address, a telephone number, and possibly a company website link. Be sure to visit the website of the retirement community in question or at least call for additional information.

Typically, you will find it easier to find retirement communities online. In fact, you will likely be provided with more options. Your local phone book may be limited in its information or it may be outdated. If you are not computer savvy yourself, consider asking a friend or trusted family member for help. An afternoon spent together can produce a large list of retirement homes and communities in or around the location of your choice.

Remember that moving into a retirement community is a huge decision. In fact, you will need to do more than just find a retirement community. You will also need to choose one. When making your decision, keep affordability in mind. It is a must to choose a retirement community that you can afford. Also, examine your needs. Do you need assistance with living day-to-day? If so an assisted living retirement community is advised.

The above mentioned methods are all ways that you can go about finding retirement communities. As an important reminder, don't just find a community to live at; choose the one that is the perfect fit for you.

How to Meet New People After Retiring

Are you getting ready to retire? If you are, you are not alone. In fact, there is a good chance that many of your friends are reaching the age of retirement as well. Unfortunately, you may find some of these friendships coming to an end or you may at least see a reduction in frequency. Why? Because many retirees are now choosing to relocate, often to their dream vacation destination.

If you find yourself retired and without many friends, you will want to take action. Retirement is a time in life when you should be enjoying yourself. This includes making and developing new friendships. For tips on how you can do so, please continue reading on.

Your county's senior center is a great place to start. Most areas in the United States have senior centers for their local seniors. These centers are typically run on a countywide basis, meaning that you may have to travel to the next town over. The good news is the reward that you will receive. At one point, many senior centers were only used to provide health and retirement advice to senior citizens, but now they are also being used for entertainment. Some counties have days filled with onsite activities, that may include cooking classes, group counseling sessions, arts and crafts, and well as bingo games.

In addition to events that are hosted by your local county's senior citizen program, there should also be other public and privately sponsored events in your area. Attending these events, namely those that are designed for seniors, is a great way to get out and meet new people. Look in your local newspaper or on community message boards for informational seminars for senior citizens, exercise classes, recreational card games, and cooking classes.

Volunteering is another great way to meet other seniors and retirees your age. As an added bonus, you can feel good about yourself in knowing that you are doing a good deed by volunteering. For the largest selection of other men and women your age, you are encouraged to examine hospitals and nursing homes that need volunteers. Other volunteer opportunities may include the library, pet shelters, and local schools.

If you are at the point where the lack of social interaction you are getting or expect to receive is having a negative impact on your health and wellbeing, consider relocating to a retirement home or community. Regardless of where you live now or where you want to live, you should have multiple living options. Retirement communities and homes are a great place to meet other retirees and senior citizens, as everyone is about the same age. Just be sure to greet those that you meet in the hall.

Speaking of retirement communities and homes, make use of all onsite services and activities. Most retirement communities and homes are designed to provide residents with convenience. For example, your facility may have weekly exercise classes, card games, or bingo games. If so, attend these events to meet new people. Also, frequenting high traffic areas, like the mailroom and laundry room, can also give you an opening to meet new people.

As you can see, there are a number of different ways that you can meet new people and develop new friendships once you enter into retirement. As an important safety note, avoid using the internet to develop new friendships, as doing so can be dangerous.

How to Plan for Your Retirement

Are you ready to start planning for your retirement? Whether you are 30 years old or 55 years old, there are a number of important steps that you will want to take. For your convenience, a few of those steps are highlighted below.

The first step in planning your retirement is examining your future. There are a number of important questions that you will want to ask yourself. Where do you want to live when you retire? How do you want to live? What do you want to be doing? Knowing your retirement needs and wants is important when looking to create a retirement savings plan. Even if you are only 20 or 30 years old, you can still plan for your retirement. A few small changes to your dream plan won't be the end of the world. At least you have a starting point to build on.

As previously stated, knowing what you want and need to get out of your retirement is important to creating a savings plan. Why? Because it can help you determine how much money you need to have saved. Having a set goal to reach is one of the best ways to accurate and successfully save and prepare for your retirement.

Next, are you employed? If so, examine your company's retirement plans, such as their 401(k) programs. How much have you been contributing to your 401(k) account? If nothing, you will want to start. Why? Because it is easy to do so. Inquire to see if you can have your paycheck set up so that a small amount of money will automatically be deposited into your 401(k) account.

As an important note, 401(k) accounts are advised, as they are considered tax sheltered. This is because your taxes are much lower when you contribute money into your 401(k). Also, see if your employer contributes money as well. There are some companies throughout the United States that will match the amounts contributed by their employees, which is you. What is better than free money for your retirement? In addition to a 401(k), also examine IRAs (Individual Retirement Accounts).

In addition to 401(k) and Individual Retirement Accounts, you do have other options. If this process seems overwhelming for you, you should seek professional help. There is nothing wrong with doing so. In fact, seeking professional advice can help prevent you from making many common mistakes. When looking for help, it is a wise idea to speak to a professional accountant or a financial advisor.

Even though you have made the decision to save for retirement now, there may come a point in time when you find yourself on a fixed income. It is no secret that living day-to-day on a fixed income can be stressful, overwhelming, and fearful. With that said, it is still important to keep on saving for your retirement. Any money that you can put into a 401(k) account or an IRA, do so. A few dollars here and there can easily add up.

In keeping with hitting a rough patch in your finances, if you are not use to living on a fixed income, you may want to take steps to improve your financial standing. This is a good plan to have, but stay away from your retirement savings. Whether you have spent the last year or ten years saving for retirement, try to leave that money alone. Dipping into your retirement savings can have negative consequences. If you are required to pay the money back, you may have to pay interest or taxes. Even if you don't have to pay the money back, it is still less that you will have for your retirement years. Unless you are in a truly serious, life or death situation, leave your retirement savings alone.

As you can see, saving for retirement isn't really that hard. Unfortunately, many news organizations and other similar websites make it seem harder than it really is. As an important reminder, if you need financial planning help, seek it.

How to Save for Retirement on a Limited Budget

Are you living day-to-day or from paycheck-to-paycheck? If you are, you are not alone. Many Americans are now finding themselves in a financial crunch. At that same time, financial advisors are still encouraging Americans to save for retirement. This is where you may feel hopeless. There is, however, good news. That good news is that there are still ways that you can save for retirement, even when experiencing financial problems right now.

The first step you should take depends on your age. If you are between the ages of forty and fifty, you will want to closely examine your retirement goals. This includes both your wants and your needs. How much money do you need to retire? To determine an amount, look at your living situation. How much will it cost you to survive with the basic necessities, including food, shelter, health insurance, and transportation? Next, examine your retirement goals or wants. Do you want to start your own business? Do you want to travel? Is there are hobby you want to take up? Examine the costs of those activities.

If you are between the ages of twenty and thirty, your retirement goals are still important. Of course, you will want to sit down and determine how much money you need to retire, but this can also wait a few years. If you are on a tight budget, it may first be a good idea to examine ways that you can save money for retirement. As an important reminder, there will need to be a point in time when you will examine your retirement years and what you want to get out them.

As for how you can start saving money for retirement when living day-to-day, you will want to track your spending. You should do so for at least a week. You will want to record every single purchase that you make, including a small bag of chips or a cup of coffee. At the end of your week, look at your spending list. Circle all of the items that you can live without or make other arrangements for.

Once you have a list of items that you can live without, it is time for you to take action. This action involves cutting corners and eliminating unnecessary purchases. The good news is that you don't necessarily have to go without. You can still save money by taking a few simple steps. For example, instead of buying a cup of coffee on the way to work each morning, make your own at home. If you are known for buying new clothes too often, consider shopping at a department store or a thrift store, as opposed to a high-end clothing store. There are so many different ways for you to save money.

Now, saving money is great, but only if you put that money where it needs to go. Do you have a 401(k) plan? If so, start applying your saved money to that plan. If you do not, open up an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). There are other options that you have as well, such as a savings account at your local bank, stocks, and bonds. Some of these methods can be risky; therefore, you will want to spread your money out.

As you can see, there are a number of ways that you can save for retirement, even when you are on a limited budget. Whatever approach you take, be sure to stick to your plan.

How to Save Money After You Retire

When it comes to saving for retirement, much focused is placed on saving in your 30s, 40s, and 50s. Of course, you will want to do so. The sooner you start saving for your retirement, the more money you will have. With that said, did you know that you can still save money after you have retired? You can.

Before focusing on a few of the many ways that you can save for retirement after you have already retired, it is important to examine your reasons for doing so. It is no secret that our wants and needs change, sometimes on a monthly basis. You may have been fine with the plan of staying around home, but you may have since changed your mind. Would you and your spouse like to travel the world or the country? Would you like to travel with friends? Do you want to start your own business or take up an expensive hobby? If so, you will need to save money, to extend to life of your retirement savings.

As for how you can make money after you retire, start examining your expenses. For starters, look at your bills. How much money are you paying for auto insurance, electricity, heat, internet, television, and phone? Are there ways that you can reduce their costs? Is there a cheaper phone, internet, or television package you can purchase? Can you find cheaper auto insurance through a different company? If you can, make the switch.

It is also important to examine unnecessary purchases. These purchases tend to reduce after leaving the workplace, but are you still spending money on things you don't need? Do you like to get a soda or coffee when you leave the house? If so, consider packaging a drink for you to take from home. As nice as it is to help your family in their time of need, make sure that you can afford to do so first. If your retirement goals depend on you saving more money, don't offer to help send your grandchildren to college or buy them a new car, no matter how hard it can be to say no. Remember that your retirement should come first.

Another easy way that you can save money after you retire is by making use of senior discounts. Many businesses, including retail stores and restaurants, do offer them. If you know you qualify for a senior discount, ask for it. Do not wait for this discount to be offered to you.

An easy way to save money after you retire is to supplement it. Are you still able to work? Can you comfortable move around or stand for long periods of time? If so, consider getting a part-time job. Many retailers need part-time employees. Some of these employees are only needed to work ten hours a week. This may be the perfect type of opportunity for you. This is an easy way to make and save more money for your retirement. Just make sure that you choose a job that you love and actually enjoy being at.

If you find yourself in need of more money for retirement, as opposed to just wanting more, it is advised that you examine your current living situation. Is your home paid off? If so, you are at an advantage, but examine your maintence costs. Is the home in constant need of repairs? Are your utility bills higher than you can afford? If so, you should consider relocating to a more affordable home. In fact, you may want to consider renting. If you are able to find an affordable apartment, the money from the sale of your home can do wonders for your retirement savings account.

As you can see, there are a number of ways that you can save money after you retire. In fact, it is recommended that you do. Your retirement goals can change at any point in time. There is also always the chance of an emergency, such as a medical emergency. Since retirement can be risky, you should be financially prepared.

Planning for Retirement Important Questions to Ask Yourself

Are you getting ready to start preparing for your retirement years? Whether you are 30 years old or 50 years old, this is an important step to take. Planning for your retirement doesn't have to be hard, but there are a number of bases that you must have covered to see success.

To make sure that you are on the right track to seeing the retirement future you always dreamed of, there are a number of important questions that you will first want to ask yourself. The answers to these questions are important when developing a retirement savings plan.

When do you want to retire? The date you would like to retire is important, as that is your goal date. To retire when you want to, your goal of saving a specific amount of money must be met. When setting this date, it is important to be realistic. If you haven't saved any money for retirement, it is highly unlikely that you can be set for life in as little as a year or two. That is why you are encouraged to start the planning process as early as possible.

Can you afford to retire when you want to? As previously stated, it is important to be realistic with your retirement goals. To help ensure that you are financially prepared and not left disappointed, determine when you can afford to retire. If the two dates don't match, you may be able to meet your goal by increasing your savings or living on a fixed income. For your own protection, do not retire until you are financially prepared to do so.

What kind of retirement lifestyle are you seeking? This is one of the most important questions you will ask yourself. Why? Because it gives you a savings goal. Of course, it is important to estimate the cost of your living expenses, but what about your wants? Do you want to spend your days vacationing along the beach? Do you want to take up a hobby like boating? Would you like to start your own business? If so, try estimating the cost of these adventures. This can help you determine how much money you need to have saved to "safely," retire.

Am I making use of my company's 401(k)? Are you employed? If so, do you have a 401(k) through your workplace? If you are employed full-time, you should. Are you contributing to your account? If not, this is a step that you must start taking now. It doesn't matter whether you want to retire in 20 years or in 5 years, any bit of money that you can put aside will help. This is particularly true if your company matches your 401(k) contributions, as you are, essentially, receiving free money.

Should I open an Individual Retirement Account (IRA)? The answer to this question is yes. If you don't already have an IRA, get one and right now. IRAs are much safer than traditional savings account, as you are less likely to dip into your account and use or "borrow," the money. An Individual Retirement Account (IRA) also provides you with tax benefits.

What benefits will I be provided with and how much? It is important to know how much you will receive in social security benefits. The good news is that this information is easy to verify with a phone call to social security offices. If you are relatively young, such as under the age of 30, remember that changes may take place that may lessen the amount of social security your were projected to receive.

Am I in debt? If you are in debt, now is the time to start taking action. Debt can have a negative impact on your retirement goals and dreams, especially when debt collectors come knocking on your door or even take you to small claims court. That is why you should never enter into retirement when you have unpaid bills. Instead, create a budget for yourself. The money that you are able to save can be spilt to repay your old debts, as well as add more money into your retirement savings.

Professional Retirement Help: Where Can You Turn

Are you in the process of planning for your retirement? If you are around the age of forty or fifty, you may be concerned with the planning process. Are you on track to retire comfortable? Do you need to save more money? How can you save that money? If these are questions that you have asked yourself, you may want to consider seeking professional help.

As nice as it is to hear that you can seek professional retirement help, you may be curious as to how you should get that help. Better yet, you may be wondering why you should pay for it. Yes, you likely have a large number of friends and family members who are tossing retirement suggestions your way, but are they really qualified to give that advice? If not, you may be putting your retirement years and your finances at risk. As for how you can seek retirement help from a professional, you do have multiple options.

A Certified Public Accountant (CPA) is a great way to seek affordable, yet professional advice on your retirement. If you have used an accountant before, you may want to return to the same individual or company. To improve the accuracy of the information given to you, choose to meet with a CPA, as opposed to an accountant who working on the side or uncertified.

When seeking professional advice through the use of an accountant, there is a lot of work that you will have to do yourself. Typically, accountants just help you get your finances in order. They help you determine how much money you have now, as well as share tips with you on how you can save money. It will often be your job to determine how much money you need to save for retirement. This involves determining your retirement wants, needs, and goals and then examining the estimated cost of them.

If you would like professional retirement help, but if you would also like to limit the amount of research that you have to do, a financial advisor is advised. Financial advisors tend to offer more services than traditional accountants do. In fact, some financial advisors specialize solely in retirement planning.

When working with a financial advisor, you will need to know what you want to get out of retirement. Where would you like to live? What type of establishment would you like to live in? What activities or hobbies would you like to enjoy during retirement? Explain these to your financial advisor and they can help you determine how much money you need to save. Next, you will both work on a plan to save that money.

Another approach that you can take involves using the services of an attorney. Typically, attorneys try to refrain from providing you detailed financial information and tips, but a long-term attorney of yours may do so. It is still recommended that you meet with an attorney however.

When entering into retirement, you need to have all of your finances and important documents in order. Do you have a will? If not, now is the time to draft one. Who will care for you or become your power of attorney in the event your health worsens? If you are married, is your home in both the name of you and your spouse? It should be.

Retirement Checklist: Are You Prepared?

Are you looking to retire within the next two to three years? If so, it is imperative that you are prepared to make the leap. Retirement can be a fun and exciting time in your life, but only if you are fully prepared for it. To make sure that you are, please continue reading on.

Before retiring from your job, make sure that you and your spouse are properly covered by health insurance. Not taking this step can be costly and it can have a negative impact on your retirement savings.

Most senior citizens are able to qualify for Medicare. Do you? If so, complete your paperwork and signup right away. You do not want to create any lapses in coverage. If you do not qualify for Medicare yet, be sure to examine other avenues of coverage. Can you purchase affordable health insurance or can you extend your current health insurance plan with COBRA?

Before retiring from your job, make sure that both you and your spouse are covered with the right amount of life insurance. Do you have a private life insurance policy? If not, now is the time to get one. Some employers terminate an employee's life insurance policy if it was provided and paid for by the company. As your age increases, life insurance is a must, so make sure that you are covered.

If you have been contributing to your company's 401(k) plan and an IRA, you need to decide when to start withdrawing this money, as well as how you want to do so. Do you want to receive one large, lump sum payment? If you are unsure, it may be best to first consult with a financial advisor. In fact, when doing so, be sure to ask about all rules and restrictions. If you withdrawal your money from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) before the written guidelines, you may be charged a penalty.

Over the past few years, you likely developed a clear vision of what your years in retirement would look like. Where do you want to live? What type of property do you want to live in? What activities do you want to enjoy? Do you want to start your own small business? Your retirement savings are likely based on your retirement wants and needs. Now is the time to make any last minute changes, as you still have a couple of years to save additional money.

Do you foresee yourself making a large purchase in the near future? These purchases can include a new home or a car. If so, now is the time to make them, especially if you will depend on financing from a professional lender. Some lenders will give loans to those in retirement, but some are also cautious of doing so, due to fixed income living. That is why you are encouraged to make all large purchases before you enter into retirement.

The above mentioned points are just a few of the many that you will want to examine and take action when needed. As a reminder, if you plan to retire in two or three years, you still have time to save for retirement. Contribute any amount that you can to your 401(k) or Individual Retirement Account (IRA). When it comes to retiring, there is no such thing as having too much money.

Retirement Planning: 5 Reasons You Should Meet a Financial Advisor

Are you planning and preparing for your retirement? If you are, you may have some questions. After all, soon-to-be retirees want and should have all of their bases covered. Of course, you can find retirement advice online or seek answers from those you know. There are, however, a number of benefits to meeting with a professional financial advisor. In fact, five reasons why are outlined below.

1 – Knowledge and Expertise

While anyone can claim to be a financial advisor, a small amount of research or recommendations from those that you know can help you ensure that you are dealing with a true professional. When doing so, you should receive valuable information. Most financial advisors are trained and experienced in the world of finance, as well as retirement. Generally, you should feel comfortable and trust the advice given to you by a financial advisor.

2 - Realistic Goals

Another benefit to meeting with a financial advisor is that he or see can make sure that your feet are on the ground. Unfortunately, many men and women get carried away with their retirement goals. If you want to start a business, you may be able to so. If you want to spend your days vacationing, you should also be able to do so. But, only if you have enough money saved. A financial advisor can let you know if it is even possible for you to meet your retirement goals in the remaining time that you have left to save.

3 – A Good Value for the Money

Yes, scheduling a meeting with a financial advisor will cost you money. Unfortunately, this is a problem for many. After all, to save for retirement, you are supposed to be saving money and reducing your expenses. While this is true, meeting with a financial advisor can be considered an investment. The small appointment fee is one that you can easily make a return on, should you adhere to the advice provided by your financial advisor.

4 – Easy to Schedule an Appointment

Many soon-to-be retirees don't want to go through the trouble to find and then schedule an appointment with a financial advisor. Doing so doesn't have to be difficult. First, ask for recommendations from those that you know and then call to make an appointment. The internet can also be used to research and find quality and reliable advisors. Your local bank may also be able to provide you with assistance.

5 – The Consequences

The consequences of not meeting with a financial advisor or not being prepared for your retirement are enough reason why you should schedule an appointment. At this point in your life, you should have been contributing to your 401(k) and you should also have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) with money in it. If not or if you don't even know what these accounts and plans are, you need to meet with a financial advisor right away.

As you can see, there are a number of benefits to scheduling an appointment with a financial advisor. A financial advisor does more than an accountant. In addition to helping you save money, they can also help you determine exactly how much money you need to retire comfortably. Yes, you can develop this total on your own, but financial advisors know to take other factors into consideration as well, such as medical emergencies and inflation. Do you?

Retirement Planning Mistakes You Need to Avoid Making

Are you ready to start planning and preparing for your retirement? If so, congratulations you are making a step in the right direction. The earlier you start planning for your retirement, the better off you will be when the time comes.

The decision to start planning and preparing for retirement is a wise decision. As previously stated, the earlier you start, the better. With that said, the earlier you start planning for retirement the more mistakes you are likely to make. These mistakes, a few of which are outlined below, can cause financial problems and more when you are ready to retire.

Not creating a budget for yourself and not tracking your spending are two mistakes that you will want to avoid making. This often leads to you spending more money than you have. You should be saving for retirement, especially at around the age of forty, not getting into debt. For that reason, never spend money that you don't have and never spend all of your money. It is best, but a must when you reach the age of forty, to start paying for all of your purchases with cash, checks, or debit cards. Before doing so, however, make sure that you have enough money to spend and keeping on saving for retirement.

Another common mistake that people make, when creating a retirement plan, involves not taking health into consideration. Health and the impact it can have on your retirement can work two different ways. For starters, what if you get sick? Can you afford the cost of emergency surgery or long-term medical care? Even if you are healthy now, remember that your health can always take a turn for the worse. It is also important to note advancements in medical technology. Many men and women are living longer than they originally planned for. You don't want to run out of retirement money just because you lived longer than expected.

In keeping with your health and wellbeing, it is important to examine your spouse and visa versa. There is a good chance that one of you will live longer than the other and possibly a significant amount of time longer. Make sure that you have enough money to retire on your own, in the event that your spouse passes away. It is also important to recheck all important documents. Make sure your will, mortgage, and all property deeds are in order and designed to protect the surviving spouse.

Relying too much on government assistance, like social security, is a mistake that many make. This is a mistake that can be damaging to you. Did you know that social security will only pay for portion of your retirement needs? On average, it only covers about 40% of your needs. What plan do you have for the other 60%? If you don't have a plan, now is the time to develop one.

The biggest mistake that many individuals make is dipping into their retirement funds before they are ready to retire. This is a huge mistake that can have a negative impact on your retirement and your finances in the future. You should never take money from your retirement funds, unless it is a dire emergency. Use your retirement savings as a last resort. If you need cash quickly, consider approaching your local bank or speaking to friends or family members to acquire small loans.

Not knowing all of your saving options is another mistake that you will want to avoid making. Did you know that there are multiple ways that you can save money for retirement? There are, for example, a employer's 401(k) program, as well as Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). There are also many others who use stock and bonds to save extra money for retirement. In fact, it is advised that you spread out your retirement savings to offer you protection. Do the proper amount of research online or schedule an appointment with a financial advisor before it is too late.

Retiring: Should You Rent or Own a Home?

Are you in the process of planning for your retirement? Of course, you will want to take steps to save money for retirement, but you also need to have a plan, Part of that plan should involve determining where you want to live and how. A common question asked by soon-to-be retirees is “Should I rent or should I own?”

When it comes to determining if you should rent or own a home during your retirement years, it can be difficult to make a decision. Why? Because every situation is different. That is why you should first examine the pros and cons of each.

As for owning your own home, the biggest benefit of doing so is the equity you are provided with. This can give you security in your older age. Renting a home or an apartment does not provide you with any security at all.

In the aspect of security, owning a home is typically advised, especially one that is already paid for. Should you find yourself short on retirement money later on, you can always sell your home. The money that you profit can be used to relocate to a smaller home or you could consider renting instead.

The biggest downside to owning a home is the costs associated with doing so. When planning to retire or when in retirement, the last thing you may want or need is a mortgage to pay. With that said, remember that you do receive benefits. The interest rates on your mortgage can be used as a tax deduction. This can save you a small, but meaningful amount of money each year.

If you are the sole owner of your home, like if your mortgage is already paid off, do not make the mistake of assuming that you are free and clear. There are still expenses that you will need to account for in your retirement years. When you own your own home, you are responsible for all taxes, including both school and property tax. When you rent an apartment or a home, you are not the individual responsible, as these should already be included in the cost of your rent.

When comparing renting and owning a home in your retirement years, maintenance and renovations should also be taken into consideration. If you are 70 years old and your house needs a new roof, would you be able to afford the cost of it? You must be able to do so if you want to continue living in retirement safely and comfortably. As for renting, many renters receive reassurance and security because they are not the individuals in charge of making or paying for needed repairs and renovations.

One downside to renting a home or apartment is cost increase. Your rent can increase at just about any point in time. In most states, unless your lease states otherwise, rent can be increased with 30 days notice. Even so, most leases are only for one year, meaning your landlord can raise your rent then. In fact, your landlord can raise your rent to any amount that they want, even an amount that you cannot afford.

So which decision is best for you? Costs should be examined. If you live in an area with high rental rates, it is best to stay in your own home or even buy a new home. When making your decision, examine the long-term costs of each. Remember that rent can increase, while fixed rate mortgages do not.

Saving for Retirement at 20

Are you around twenty years of age? If you are, retirement may be the last thing on your mind. With that said, it should be at least towards the forefront. Why? Because the amount of money that you are able to save throughout your lifetime can have a significant impact on your future, the amount of money you have, and how you live until you die. Do you really want to be homeless or living with family when you should be able to support yourself?

One mistake that many men and women make around the age of twenty is assuming that they have more time to save for retirement. Yes, you do. You have into your 30s, 40s, 50s, and possibly even into a part of your 60s. With that said, there are no guarantees that you will be able to save money in that time frame. You have a job now, but will you five or ten years from now? There are too many what ifs that could result in you not having enough money to retire. That is why you are urged to start saving for retirement now, when you know you can.

Okay, you now know that you should start saving for retirement now, even if you are only 21 or 28 years old. You may, however, be wondering what steps you should take. First, you need to meet with human resource workers from your workplace. These individuals are knowledgeable on retirement plans that are operated by or through your company. One of those being the 401(k) program. Your company may also have a pension program that you can participate in as well.

When meeting with a company representative to inquire about retirement savings through your company, ask about matching. Most companies will match contributions made by their employees. There may, however, be some rules and restrictions concerning this match. For instance, you may have to contribute a specific dollar amount or percentage of your income. Speaking of which, most financial advisors recommend that those in their 20s put around 5% to 7% of their yearly income into a 401(k).

In addition to 401(k)s, those in their twenties are also encouraged to look into Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). Although you will find some disputes online, many financial advisors suggest that Roth IRAs are best for those who are young in age. The only downside to Roth IRAs is that they money is not tax free when you deposit it into your account. It is, however, tax free when you retire, as long as you followed all rules and guidelines, such as not borrowing from your account early.

Another great way for you and others in their twenties to save money for retirement is to look at your spending habits. Most twenty year olds are known for their not so careful spending. Do you have extra money each week that you blow on new clothes or snacks that you don't really need? If you do, consider depositing that money into a savings account. Even if you only deposit $5 into your account a week, the money can significantly add up overtime. In fact, why not use a calculator to determine how much that $5 a week can turn into overtime. Don't forget that you can benefit from interest rates.

Saving for retirement early is a great way to make sure that you are set for life. The earlier that you start saving money, the more money you are likely to have in the end. With that said, there are risks. Due to young age, more individuals like you are likely to tap into their retirement savings. This is can be a risky and costly move. Remember that your retirement is important and that money shouldn't be used for a new expensive outfit or a trip overseas, especially one that you do not need to survive. Aside from depositing money into your accounts, it is best to just forget about them.

Saving for Retirement at 30

Are you in your thirties? If you are, retirement may be something that you occasionally think about. If not, now is the time to start. While there are a number of benefits to saving for your retirement years when you are in your twenties, it is imperative that you start in your thirties. If not, you may find yourself with little or no money to retire with.

One of the easiest ways to set aside money for your retirement years is by saving money. Take any bit of money that you are able to save, by eliminating unnecessary purchases, and put it away. To save the most money, examine your spending habits. Buying an expensive pair of jeans is a nice pick-me-up when you were twenty, but now is the time to start worrying about your future. Remember, apply any money saved to your retirement future.

As for what you should do with your saved money, you do have a number of different options. One of the easiest approaches to take is to open a savings account. Often times, all you need is $50 to do so and your account should be fee-free, as long as you maintain the minimum monthly balance. As easy as it is to open a savings account, only do so if you are good with money. You will want deposit money into your savings account and forget all about it. If you have a passbook, hide it. Ignoring your savings account, aside from putting money into it, is the best way to leave it untouched. Unfortunately, with a savings account, it is much easier to get a hold of your money and you can do so without any immediate consequences.

As nice as savings account is, there are many other profitable and convenient approaches for you to take. These include a 401(k) plan. If you are employed and full-time, you should be able to contribute to your 401(k) plan. Have you already been doing so? If not, it is recommended that you start. Those in their twenties are encouraged to deposit at least 5% of their income into a 401(k). The same percentage is recommended for those in their thirties, as long as contributions were previously made. If this is the first year that you will continue to your 401(k), 7% to 10% is recommended. 401(k)s are nice because they offer tax savings and many employers will match contributions.

As previously stated, now is the time for you to start saving money. Eliminating unnecessary purchases and carefully tracking your spending is a great to reduce your living expenses and save additional money for retirement. Before you put all of that money into a savings account, 401(k), or an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), examine your debt. Do you have any? Retirement and debt do not mix, so take steps to rid yourself of debt and start doing so now. The best step to take is to reduce your expenses, which was outlined below, and split the money saved between a retirement savings account and your unpaid debt.

Now is also about the time that you should start thinking about what you want your retirement to be like. Many people think this is a step that is too early for someone in their thirties to take, but there is no harm in planning ahead. Where do you see yourself when you retire? What kind of home would you like to live in? Do you intend to travel? What activities do you want to enjoy? These questions can help you determine how much money you need to retire. Of course, you can still continue to save money for retirement even if you don't know the answers to these questions, but a goal can help make sure you are able to retire comfortably and with ease.

The above mentioned steps are just a few of the many that you, a person around the age of thirty, can take to prepare for retirement. They are, however, the easiest steps to take.

Saving for Retirement at 40

Are you in your forties? If you are, retirement may be something that you occasionally think about. After all, you have been in the workforce long enough to wish you could get out of it. With the right retirement plan, you may be able to do so a little bit sooner than originally planned.

Of course, retiring a year or two early sounds nice, but it isn't as easy as you may have thought. The good news is that you are at the right time in your life. The amount of money that you are able to save and put towards retirement in your forties can have a significant impact on when you are able to retire.

If you have been putting aside a little bit of money in an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or if you have been contributing to your 401(k), there is a good chance that you sat down and set retirement goals for yourself. This may include where you want to live and what activities you want to enjoy. Since your goals may have since changed, they should be reexamined. This is important in the event of a cost increase. If the costs of your retirement goals have increased, you need to work on saving more money.

It is also important to look at your spending. If you are a parent, now may be the time when your children are getting ready for college. Are you footing the college bills? If you wish to do so, first make sure that you can. As important as it is for your children to get an education, do not go into debt and do not dip into you retirement savings to pay for that education. Instead, examine other avenues of financing, which may include student loans for your children, scholarships, and grants.

If you have any debt, now is the time to get it paid off. Request a copy of your credit report. If any bills are marked as unpaid, work on getting them paid off. You cannot comfortably and securely retire if you are suffering from debt. The average consumer debt can be quite high. If yours is high, you may need to spend five to ten years paying it. That is why you should start now.

As it was previously stated, most individuals start contributing to their 401(k) plans or open an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) in their late twenties or thirties. If this is a step that you have yet to take, do so. The sooner, the better. On average, experts recommend contributing at least 5% of your income to be put in a 401(k) or an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). With that said, if you are just getting started now, at least 10% of your income should be contributed.

Now is also the time to look at how retirement works. For example, most financial advisors state you will need at least 70% of your income to comfortably retire. Do you have this money? Can you reasonably come up with it? If not, now is the time to take further action. You do not want to rely on social security payments, as they are only able to provide most retirees with an average of 40% of needed income.

To make is so that you are able to relax and enjoy life in retirement, as opposed to working through it, it is a wise idea to start cutting corners now. Are there any unnecessary purchases that you can eliminate to help you save money? Can you reduce the packages for your television, internet, or cable? Are there ways for you to reduce your car insurance payments? If so, do so. Any money that you save can be put into a checking account or deposited into your IRA.

The above mentioned steps are just a few of the many that you, a person around the age of forty, can take to prepare for retirement. Remember, each year that passes by is one less year for you to save money for your retirement. Don’t be left out in the cold or be unable to enjoy your favorite activities later on in life because you didn’t start planning for retirement when you should of.

Saving for Retirement at 50

Are you fifty years of age? If so, are you prepared for retirement? For many, retirement is just around the corner, about at the age of sixty. While some individuals will find themselves in good financial standing, many more see just how unprepared for retirement they are.

If you are unprepared for retirement, there is good news. That good news is that it isn't too late to start saving. If you just turned fifty, you likely have a little bit more than ten years to save. While it won't be as easy as it was when you were twenty, thirty, or forty, it is still possible.

The first step in planning for retirement at the age of fifty is determining how much money you need to save. On average, financial experts state that most individuals need at least 70% of their current income to financially survive through retirement. A small percentage of that, around 30% to 40%, may come from social security benefits. It is also stated that you should prepare to spend thirty years in retirement.

If you have been contributing to a 401(k) plan at work, you are a step ahead. You likely have a few thousand dollars or more saved. You will want to keep on contributing. Be sure to meet the requirements that your company has for matching. When you do so, your company will match the contributions that you made. This money can go a long away, especially if you are finding yourself unprepared for retirement.

If you are employed, it is also important to examine pension plans. Pension plans are advised for long-term employees. Now is the best time to get one, as you are less likely to leave your job. There are some companies that have rules and restrictions, such as you lose you pension if you switch jobs.

It is also important to examine Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). Do you already have one? If not, now is the time to start. IRAs give you numerous tax benefits and they are a much better approach than traditional savings accounts. Why? Because many individuals find it easier to dip into their savings accounts and spend their money. Whether you use that money for yourself or give it to family members, it reduces the amount of money that you have for retirement. It is also important to note that the rules for IRAs are less strict when you reach the age of fifty, as you are able to deposit more money into your account.

As previously stated, most individuals will receive social security benefits that account for about 30 to 40% of income needed during retirement. This is, however, just an average figure. You can request a statement that outlines your benefits. This statement can give you an idea of how much in social security benefits you will receive overtime. With that said, this is also just an estimate; therefore, it is not a figure that you should rely heavily on.

Now it also the time to start living on a fixed income. There are two benefits to doing so. When in retirement, you will be on a fixed income. You will run into trouble if your money runs out too soon. Starting to live on a fixed income now can give you practice for when you truly do depend on it. Also, when living on a fixed income, you are able to reduce your expenses. Any money that you save can be put towards your retirement.

If worse comes to worse and you are truly worried about retirement, now is the time to supplement your income. A second job may be the last thing you want or need, but it may help you considerably. If you do opt for a second part-time job, place any money that you make into a retirement account, whether it be an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or a savings account. Working a second job when you are fifty is much better than doing so when you are sixty.

Saving for Retirement at 60

Are you sixty years old? If you are, you may be preparing for retirement. As excited as you may be about no longer have to work, can you really afford the transition? If you haven't been preparing for retirement, it isn't too late to get started, but you need to get started now.

The first thing you will want to do is start contributing to your 401(k) program. At this point in your life, any contributions that you can make, you should. At the very least, contribute 5% of your income. However, know that many employers will match contributions made by their employees. There is a minimum amount that you must contribute to receive this matching. If you do, you can essentially get free money for your retirement.

Next, you will also want to consider opening a Roth Individual Retirement Account (Roth IRA). At your age, you are able to deposit more money into your account than those younger than you. When you go to withdraw the money, it is tax-free, as long as you wait until the right time to make your withdrawal.

Next, you will want to examine your retirement wants and needs. Typically, this is the first step that you take. However, if you haven't been saving for retirement, it is imperative that you get started soon. Depositing any extra money that you have right from the start can help you get ahead in your goal to save for retirement.

Returning back to your retirement needs, examine your housing. Is your house costly to maintain? If it is and if there isn't much sentimental value attached to your home, consider relocating to a more affordable housing option. In fact, you may want to closely examine retirement communities. Most are affordable to live in and you are automatically paired with neighbors that are your age, many of which will share your interests.

It is also important to examine your retirement wants. What do you see yourself doing when you retire? If you are like most retirees, you will likely want to do things other than stay at home watching television. Do you want to travel? Do you want to start your own business? Are there other activities that you want to enjoy, such as camping, boating, or fishing? If so, it is important to examine these costs and add them to the estimated amount of money you need to save to retire comfortably.

Next, it is important to learn to cut corners. Do you live in a fixed income? If not, it is time for you to start. When in retirement, most men and women are on a fixed income. For example, if you were to spend your retirement savings before you pass away, you are essentially left with nothing. Is this really how you want to live? It is important to practice living on a fixed income. If you find that you cannot do so, you have a small amount of time left to increase your retirement savings by working longer.

Now is also the time to examine your debt. Do you have any? To see, request a copy of your credit report. Usually, the companies that you owe money to will try to collect. This may involve a request to appear in small claims court. Should this happen to you, you may be court ordered to pay the money. This can put a damper on your retirement savings and plans. Eliminating this from happening by making sure that all your debts are paid off before you retire.

One question that many individuals in their sixties have involves paying off that debt. Many wonder how they can pay off their debt when they are also supposed to be saving for retirement. The two actually go hand-in-hand. When you pay off your debt, you should have more money for retirement in the long-run. Also, you can work to save money by eliminating unnecessary purchases or temporarily supplementing your income with a second, part-time job. A good approach to take is dividing the money into two. Some money can go towards your unpaid debt and the rest can go into a retirement account.

Saving for Retirement When Running a Small Business

Are you a small business owner? If so, are you ready for retirement? Whether you are only thirty years old or if you are fifty, retirement should be on your mind. Small business owners are 100% in charge of their retirement. If you don't start acting now, you may find it difficult to stop working and retire in a timely matter.

As previously stated, you will want to get started with saving for retirement as early as possible. Small business owners are encouraged to start planning for retirement in their thirties or even earlier. Why? Because setting up retirement savings accounts, such as an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) can be harder for small business owners. Often times, more paperwork is needed and extra verification is often required. For that reason, the earlier you start, the better your financial situation will look when it comes time to retire.

One step that you will not want to take involves relying on the sale of your business. Unfortunately, this is where many small business owners find themselves in trouble. Many believe that they can sell their business and live off the profits. Yes, this may happen, but you may be surprised to learn how slim the chances are. Even if your business turns a nice profit, you still may not have any buyers. Many entrepreneurs like to start their own businesses from the ground up and not everyone has the funds needed to purchase a profitable and well-established business, like yours.

Since you are encouraged to not rely on the sale of your business for retirement, you may want to refrain from selling. How many employees do you have? If you have one or more employees, can you work with and train someone to take over your position? If so, you can retire and still collect profits from your business. If you must hire an employee to replace the worker you promoted, your profits may slightly decrease, but you should still have enough to survive throughout your retirement. If worse comes to worse, you can always return to work.

As a reminder, no matter how successful your business is, you should not rely on it as your only source of income during your retirement years. That is why you should also examine popular retirement saving accounts. Aside from a traditional savings account that you deposit extra business profits into, you should examine 401(k) programs. Unfortunately, many small business owners do not know that they exist for them. They do. A Single Participant 401(k), also commonly referred to as a Solo 401(k), may be perfect for you. They enable business owners who don't have employees to save money for retirement. Higher contributions are also allowed.

When it comes to creating a Single Participant 401(k) or a Solo 401(k), you may want to speak to a financial advisor. This is because companies that offer these types of plans and programs can be difficult to find. They are out there, but you may need help finding them. Also, consulting with a financial advisor cannot do you any harm. In fact, you may learn additional tips and techniques for saving for retirement as a small business owner.

Speaking of additional tips, it is important to not put all of your eggs in one basket. As previously stated, do not rely on your business to get you through retirement. Also, do not rely just on a 401(k) plan. Depending on your contributions, such as how often you paid your taxes, you should also qualify for social security benefits. You can estimate your benefits by contacting the United States Social Security Department, but still don't rely on it. On average, it only covers about 30% to 40% of income needed during retirements.

To stretch your money to its fullest extent and to properly and safely prepare for retirement, examine 401(k)s for small business owners, SEP-IRAs, SIMPLE IRAs, stocks, and bonds. In the event that one of your options does not pan out, you still have savings to fall back on.

Saving for Retirement When Working from Home

Are you self-employed? If you are or even if you are a home based worker who is employed as a contractor for another company, you may be disappointed to learn that you are, essentially, on your own when it comes to retirement. Those who work from home are responsible for saving and setting up their own retirement accounts. Unfortunately, this leaves many men and women regretting their decision to work from home.

Planning for retirement when working from home or when self-employed may seem like a long and hopeless process, but it doesn't have to be. Even though you do not have a "traditional," nine to five day job, you can still save and start preparing for your retirement. In fact, now is the best time to get started.

One of the first steps you will need to take involves determining how much money you will need for retirement. This can be difficult to do, but at least a rough estimate is advised. To estimate how much money you will need for retirement, examine your needs and goals. Where do you envision yourself in the future? Where do you want to live? What activities do you see yourself enjoying? It is important for you to answer these questions, as there is no way for you to meet your retirement goals if you don't have any.

Another way that you can go about planning and saving for your retirement, when working from home or when self-employed, is by creating a monthly budget. Unfortunately, not all home based workers are raking in the money. Some moms work at home part-time and some offer services, such as web design and freelance writing, that are not needed on a regular schedule. If you are one of those individuals, a budget is a must have. Monthly budgets are advised, as our expenses tend to vary from month to month.

When creating a budget, take your average monthly earnings and just start subtracting your expenses. If you are married, you will also want to include your husband or wife's expenses as well. There is no reason why the two of you can't help each other with creating a retirement savings plan. After all of the necessities have been added to your budget, such as your rent, mortgage, car loan, car insurance, food, gasoline, and utility bills, how much money is left? Take a percentage of that money or a set dollar amount each month and set it aside for your retirement years.

Speaking of saving your money, many home based workers want to run on down to their local banks and open up a savings account. This is okay, but it, honestly, isn't the best approach to take. Instead, look for those that you can benefit from opening, like those that are considered tax-deferred accounts or programs. Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) are recommended, but SEP-IRA accounts are designed specifically for small business owners and the self-employed.

It is also a wise idea to seek professional help. This help can come from a professional accountant or a professional financial advisor. It is best if you seek this professional help around the age of 40. This gives you enough time to make changes if your financial advisor thinks you do not have enough money for retirement saved. In fact, many home based workers and self-employed individuals wonder what happens when they don't have enough money saved for retirement.

If the time for you to retire arrives and you don't believe that you can financially survive until you pass away, don't quit working. Do not use this as a part of your plan, however. You should plan and save for your retirement with the goal you will stop working. If you find yourself short on money, consider working part-time to make up the difference. If and when the time comes, you can also make additional changes, such as moving into a smaller home or relocating to a more affordable city or town.

Saving for Retirement: Why Flexibility is Important

Are you ready to start preparing for your future, in terms of retirement? If you are, you should get planning right away. In fact, the sooner you start planning for your retirement, the better off you are likely to be. That is why most men and women are encouraged to start saving for their retirement years when they are in their early twenties or thirties.

When saving for retirement, you will want to create a detailed, yet realistic goal. After all, you need to know how much money you should save. Even if you are young, like in your twenties or early thirties, outlining your retirement goals and aspirations are important, despite the fact that they may later change.

To determine how much money you should save for retirement, there are a number of important questions that you first need to ask yourself. Where do you want to live? Do you need to relocate to get to that destination? What type of home or living arrangement do you see yourself as having? What hobbies or activities would you like to take up? Do you want to start a small business in retirement? If so, start estimating the cost of these. When doing so, also take into account the standard cost of living, such as the basic needs of shelter, food, and transportation. Inflation should be accounted for as well.

Once you have completed the above mentioned step of determining how much you need to save for retirement, you will want to expand that amount. You should always save more money than you need. Why? Because there are no guarantees with retirement or an age increase. Your retirement spending plan should account for flexibility, as there are some events that can arise that call for you to be flexible with your spending.

As previously stated, inflation should be taken into consideration. The cost of goods and services will only continue to rise as you age. Not accounting for this rise can cause you to not have enough retirement money. Online, you can find a number of tools that can help you calculate the estimated inflation rate at your time of retirement. Keep in mind, however, that these are only estimates. A financial advisor can also provide you with these numbers.

Next, it is important to remember that your health may start to worsen after retirement. Many senior citizens reach a point in time when long-term care is needed. Even if you are sixty years old and in good health, please remember that can change at just about any minute. Are you prepared for that change, if and when it arrives? You should be. The cost of long-term care should be included in your retirement savings. If you are retiring with your spouse, examine the cost of long-term care for each of you. Unlike living comfortably with one another in an independent living retirement community, the cost of long-term care can be expensive.

Flexibility is also important as your family situation can change as well. Do you have children? If you do, do not rely on your children to help make it through retirement financially. Even if your children are in good financial standing now or when you first enter into retirement, that can easily change. It is expensive to raise a family, as you likely already know. You do not want to put your children's health, family, or finances, at risk; therefore, you should make sure your retirement savings plan is flexible and able to account for many of the unexpected events that life can throw your way.

The Best Ways to Save for Retirement

Are you looking for information on the best ways to save for retirement? If you are, you have come to the right place. Please continue reading on.

Establish a Moneysaving Goal

If you want to save money for retirement, it is first important to determine how much money you need to save. This is the most important step to take, when looking to save for retirement. While you can always save money for retirement without having a goal in mind, will you have enough? You will never know unless you take the time to do the research first.

When determining how much you need to comfortably retire, examine your wants and needs. Account for living expenses, such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare and other related expenses. Next, what are your retirement goals? What type of home would you like to live in? Where you would like to live? What activities do you want to enjoy? Calculate the average cost of these. That total figure is your retirement savings goal. As an important reminder, do not stop saving even if you reach that goal early on.

Create a Budget for Yourself

Creating a budget is another easy way to save money for retirement. Why? Because it can help you determine where you can save money. Many Americans waste money and a considerable amount of it. To prevent yourself from doing so, create a budget. This budget should include expenses that you must pay; ones that you cannot live without. For example, your rent or mortgage payment and all utility bills, transportation costs, and food should be included in your budget.

Once your needed expenses are totaled, subtract that amount from your monthly income. The difference is money that you can and should put into a retirement savings account.

Eliminate Unnecessary Purchases

In keeping with creating a budget, be sure to eliminate unnecessary purchases. If you work outside of the home, do you bring your lunch to work or make your coffee at home? If not, you should start doing so. If you are 35 years old, you may be surprised with how much money you can save over the next ten or twenty years by taking this simple approach.

In addition to completely eliminating unnecessary purchases, consider reducing those that you do not want to give up. For example, do you like to eat out? Instead of eating out once a week, aim for once a month. Also, examine the packages for your phone, cable, and internet. Can you reduce their costs without having to give them up completely? If so, do so.

Contribute to Your 401(k)

Do you have a 401(k) plan through your employer? If so, do you currently contribute to it? If not, now is the time to start, even if you are only twenty years old. Those between the ages of twenty and forty are encouraged to contribute around 5% to 10% of their income. Those forty to sixty years old are encouraged to contribute as much as possible.

What is nice about 401(k) plans is that most employers maximize your contributions. For instance, if you were to meet your company's minimum personal contribution for the year, they may match that money for you! Yes, you do still have to deposit your own money, but the money that your employer contributes can be considered free money.

Seek Professional Help

While you can find a number of helpful retirement planning resources online, this information can sometimes be difficult to read. Sometimes, it seems as if financial experts are talking in a different language.

If you are not familiar with 401(k) plans, Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), social security benefits, and pension plans, you should schedule a meeting with a professional financial advisor. Not only can they help you understand these great retirement programs and accounts, they can also help you develop a sold retirement savings plan. This can help to ensure that you successfully meet your goal.

Tips for Choosing a Retirement Community

Are you preparing for your retirement? Once you have determined that your finances are in good standing, you may be concerned with your living arrangements. Despite the fact that many retirees choose to stay right where they are, many more opt for retirement home communities. If you are interested in doing so, you will want to choose your retirement community wisely.

The first step in choosing a retirement community involves familiarizing yourself with all of your options. Did you know that you have multiple choices? You do. Retirement communities come in a number of different formats.

Independent retirement communities and facilities are the most popular choice among retirees who are in good health. These are establishments where you are essentially on your own. It is like you are just renting an apartment. Often times, the only onsite staff members are office workers, maintenance workers, and security personnel. Many independent retirement communities are designed to provide you with ease of living. This includes making onsite activities, like exercise classes and arts and crafts, available.

Assisted living communities and facilities are ideal for retirees whose health is just starting to worsen. If you need help on occasion, an assisted living retirement community may be perfect for you. The assistance provided does vary, but you can get help with going for a walk outdoors, cooking, preparing for your day, or taking your medication.

Nursing homes and facilities are another retirement option for those poor in health. Nursing homes are essentially hospitals with a more laidback environment. They are designed for individuals who cannot care for themselves. If you are researching nursing homes, you are likely a family member of the retiree, not him or her. When residing in a nursing home, patients are provided with around-the-clock care. This is a nice alternative to living with family or constant home nurse care.

Continuing care retirement facilities and communities are another option that you have. This option is one that is increasing in popularity. Continuing care retirement facilities and communities essentially provide residents with independent living, assisted living, and around-the-clock care, depending on the resident's needs. These facilities are great for retirees who are concerned with their health and finances. Yes, your health may be good now, but there are no guarantees with the future. Relocating and putting stress on your family isn't advised. That is why continuing care facilities are often recommended.

When making your retirement community and care decision, it is important examine your needs. Do you need assistance with day-to-day activities? Are you suffering from a debilitating disease that will only continue to get worse? If so, you should examine assisted living communities, nursing homes, or continuing care facilities.

Next, examine your retirement community wants. Do you want to meet new people and develop new friendships? If so, make sure that the retirement community or facility is well populated. Also, examine onsite activities, as they make it easier to meet new people.

Finally, examine cost and location. Always choose a retirement community that you can afford. If you are the relative of a retiree who needs care, be sure to keep quality in mind. Affordability is important, but not if quality must be compromised. As for location, choose a retirement community that is nearby your family. As you age, you will need the love and support of your family more.

Tips for Helping Your Parents Plan for Retirement

Are you concerned with your parents and their future? If you are, you should talk to your parents about their retirement plans. In fact, the sooner, the better. Doing so can give you, as a loved one, comfort and peace of mind. You should start discussing retirement with your parents when they reach the age of fifty; however, you can start the conversation sooner if you wish.

When talking to your parents about retirement, determine what their retirement wants and needs are. Where do they want to live? What type of property or establishment do they want to live in? What activities or hobbies would they like to enjoy? It is important to know how your parents want to live in their retirement years, as it will have an impact on how much they need to save.

Next, it is important to determine how much your parents currently have saved for retirement. Is it enough? Do they even know? If you are concerned with asking your parents, take the above mentioned approach first. Asking your parents about their retirement goals can ease you into the conversation about costs and savings. Asking your parents outright how much money they have saved for retirement may cause tensions to erupt.

When discussing their retirement with your parents, make sure your parents know that they cannot live on just their social security benefits. You may be surprised how many retirees plan to do so. Once again, be sure to take a cautious approach. You want to lookout for the best interests of your parents, but don't treat them like a child who knows nothing on the subject. Returning back to social security benefits, tell your parents you read online that most retirees only receive about 40% of their living expenses through social security benefits.

In keeping with social security benefits, you should encourage your parents to request a statement of their benefits. This is easy to do online or over-the-phone. This statement can give them an estimate of how much they will receive in social security benefits. This is a good wakeup call for those who believe social security will cover their retirement expenses. Be sure to remind your parents that their statement is just an estimated total.

You will also want to examine your parent's profession. This is important, as the economy is having a negative impact on many businesses. Some older workers are finding themselves forced into early retirement. Is your father or mother in the auto industry or another industry that is taking a hit? If so, there is a chance they could be forced to retire early, if it hasn't already happened. In the event of forced, early retirement, do your parents have a plan?

Also, discuss healthcare with your family. If your parents were to move into a retirement community examine the costs. Then, examine the costs of long-term care. When your parents live together, they are able to save money, but what happens when one gets sick? Can your parents afford two separate living arrangements? Make sure the cost of long-term care is realistically entered into their retirement plan.

Speaking to your parents about retirement is a step in the right direction, but they can still benefit from professional help. If you feel that your parents are unprepared for retirement, offer to schedule and pay for a meeting with a financial advisor.

Tips for Saving for Retirement

Are you concerned with retirement? If you aren't, you should be. Of course, retirement is nothing that you have to be worried or fearful about, but now is the time for you to start planning. In all honesty, it doesn't matter whether you are 25 years old or 55 years old. It is never too soon to start planning for your retirement years.

The first step in saving for retirement is to determine how much money you need to save. When doing so, be sure to keep inflation costs in mind. The cost of goods will likely increase overtime as you age. Calculators online or a talk with a financial advisor can give you an estimated inflation rate to work with.

In keeping with estimating your retirement money needs, look at your wants and needs. As for needs, you will need shelter with the appropriate utilities, food to eat, transportation, and money for your healthcare. These are items that you cannot live without. Next, examine your wants. Where do you want to live in retirement? What do you want to be doing in retirement; boating, camping, traveling? To have the golden years of your dreams, make sure that you have enough money to do so.

You will also need to plan for the unexpected. Often times, the unexpected is considered a medical emergency or a death, but in this case it can be living longer than expected. Many seniors are living longer than expected. Unfortunately, many seniors are also running out of money because of this. Do not let yourself be one of those individuals.

Now is also the time to start paying off any money you owe. The earlier you are able to pay off your debts, the better your finances will be. You and your family won't have to worry about your unpaid bills coming back to haunt you later on. You can also save money by paying off your debts. Credit card fees and other similar late fees can add up, taking valuable money away from your golden years. Once your debt has been paid off, take the same amount of money you were putting towards your debt into a retirement account.

As it was previously stated, you may want to seek professional help. This help can come from an accountant or a financial advisor. These professionals can help you create a solid retirement savings plan. For example, they can help you curb your spending, develop a savings goal, as well as help you allocate your funds into the correct accounts.

If you are employed, you should have a 401(k) program through your employer. Do you contribute to this account? If not, now is the time to start doing so. Any bit of money that you can deposit into your 401(k) is a good idea, as it can later help. It is also important to familiarize yourself with your company's policy. Some business in the United States will deposit additional money into the accounts of their employees. For example, some will match your personal 401(k) contributions. While certain rules and restrictions may apply, this is a great way to get free money for your golden years.

Another way that you can go about preparing and saving for retirement is by living on a fixed income. Even if you are only 30 years old and in good financial standing, there are a number of benefits to creating a fixed income budget. This can save money, as a fixed income often calls for the elimination of unnecessary purchases. Once you hit the age of 50, you are encouraged to revert to a fixed income. Not only can you continue to save money for your retirement, you can also practice. Most retirees live on fixed incomes. If you aren't prepared to do so, you may end up with nothing left.

The above mentioned steps are just a few of the many that you can take to start preparing for and saving for your golden retirement years. As a reminder, the earlier you get started, the more money you should save.

Why Saving For Retirement Is Important

Whether you are 20, 30, 40, 50, or 60 years of age, are you planning for retirement? If not, you should be. Unfortunately, many individuals do not understand the importance of planning for retirement. If you are one of those individuals, please continue reading on for information that will likely change your outlook on planning and preparing for your retirement.

The greatest reason why you should save for retirement is because it is your life. The amount of money that you save for retirement will have a profound impact on how your life is lived. Do you have any dreams or goals? Typically, retirement is the best time to meet your goals and transform your dreams into reality, but you can only do so if you are financially prepared. If you are not, you may be worried about where you will live or where your next meal will come from, as opposed to wondering when the best time to take a vacation is.

Another important reason why you should start saving for retirement and early is for your children. Even if you are twenty years old and single, remember that there may come a point in your life when you have a family. Those who do not properly plan and save for retirement put a huge burden on their families. As a parent, it is your job to protect your children, not cause them to face their own financial difficulties because they must pay for your retirement expenses.

Saving for retirement can also help to ensure that you are well cared for. This is important in terms of health. There comes a point in everyone’s life when his or her health starts to worsen with age. While you may be able to live on your own and care for yourself when you first enter into retirement, there may come a point in time when you can no longer do so. If and when that time comes, are you financially prepared? Can you afford the cost of long-term care? The cost of long-term can be expensive and it should be included in the cost of your retirement; therefore, you should start saving now.

Another one of the many reasons why you will want to start saving for your retirement is because you won't want to keep on working. Those who are unprepared for retirement often keep on working or later return to the workforce. Is this really something that you want to do? Also, remember your age and your health. It is highly unlikely that you will be able to work until you die. That is why you should start saving for retirement, as you cannot generate income for yourself forever.

Finally, social security benefits are nice, but they will not cover all of your retirement living expenses. Many financial advisors state you will need around 70% of your current income to live comfortably in retirement. Unfortunately, most individuals only receive about 40% of that from social security benefits. Depending on how much you contributed through the payment of taxes, that amount may be lower. Since you cannot rely on social security benefits to survive, you need to start saving for retirement.

As highlighted above, there are a number of reasons why you should save for retirement. Your life is in your own hands, so start saving today.

Make a Plan and Make it Work

Being ready for retirement is not something that just happens. Every single person you see in retirement today that is enjoying a leisurely life in their golden years are where they are because they planned for it. The first question that may come to mind is when the right time to start planning for your retirement might be. The answer is that if you are asking the question, it's the right time. You really cannot start planning too soon. If you could start putting money back for retirement as early as right out of high school, that would be just that much more time you have to build up a really comfortable retirement nest egg that will serve you well when you need it in your golden years.

But most of us start thinking about retirement in our adult years and usually in association with some big life event such as getting married or having a baby. So we have one word of advice if you have been thinking about beginning a retirement plan. That advice is stop thinking about it and take action. If you make the subject a focus for you and your spouse to look at, you both will be glad you got off the dime and got moving on a plan.

Often the trouble with making a retirement plan is you don't know where to start. Too many people just wait for their employers to introduce a 401K plan and they just dump some money in there and count on Social Security to be there in a few decades. Then they call it a day and call that a retirement plan.

You and I both know that your security in your golden years is too important to not take more seriously than that. So set aside some time each week for both of you to sit down and start thinking about how to create a retirement fund and how to plan to build a retirement plan that you can grow into. The first step always begins with you.

If you don't know where to start, then admit that and set about to do some reading to get ideas. You are doing that right now by reading this article. But get out there on the internet and find some of the great books out there on retirement planning and take some time and read them. You will start out ignorant and end up an expert in retirement planning.

Keep plenty of notes during the discussion and learning phases so you have a road map of ideas to build into a plan for building a retirement fund. Once you have a simple plan, its time to talk to a financial advisor. If you trust your bank, go talk to them and see what they can do for you. Or you can seek out a friend or someone in your community who you know will be able to steer you toward how to build a retirement fund that is structured properly to protect your retirement money from taxes and be there for you when you need it when you are old and grey.

Now it is time to kick it up to the next level. Once you have a plan and perhaps are seeing it start to take off, start learning about investments. There are lots of places you can see your retirement funds go that will give you a nice yield that can make that fund grow more quickly do to shrewd investing. You can divert money to real estate, the stock market, mutual funds or other well know investments. Diversify where you put your money so no one financial reversal can whip out your retirement funding.

Above all stay on top of your retirement fund and your retirement plan. Review it together frequently to see if your retirement goals are still the same and your investments and pans for building our retirement fund line up with that plan. By making retirement planning as big a part of your thinking as planning your family or your career, you will give it serious attention over the years. And the result will be a strong financial plan that will give you good resources to enjoy a happy and worry free retirement life.

Make your Retirement Money Walk With You

Planning for retirement is a project that you do for virtually your entire adult life. The earlier you start putting money back for retirement, the better your golden years will be. And if you have been faithful in participating in your employers 401K plan, you can start to some serious money begin to build up as you realize the vesting of the employer matching funds and you continue to make your contributions month after month. It can get pretty exciting when you get those statements and you see your retirement fund really start to take shape.

But your career in business can take a lot of twists and turns along the way. And sometimes you change jobs for a lot of reasons. But the question comes up then, "What happens to my 401K money if I leave before retirement?" The good news is that you don't lose it. The 401K program is federally monitored and once those funds go in there, they are yours if you are vested in them.

But if you move jobs several times during your career which is very common in the modern business marketplace, if you don't take some action, you can end up with retirement money scattered over all of your last jobs which is messy and makes for a nightmare to keep track of. It would be better if you can make your retirement money walk with you so you know where it is and you can keep all of your retirement planning funds in one place so you can take advantage of them all at once when you are ready to retire.

When you first leave your employer to go to another company you are given a couple choices of what to do with your retirement funds. One option is to leave them behind to catch up with them decades later when you are ready to retire. In addition to wanting to keep this important asset with you as you travel from job to job, you have no idea if that employer will even be in business when you are ready to retire. You don't need that kind of uncertainty when it comes to your retirement money.

Another option that is offered to you is to cash out your 401k and withdraw the results. While this may be attractive if you are between jobs, it's really a bad idea. For one thing, the laws governing the 401k call for you to pay a large penalty if you withdraw them before retirement age. Not only that, once you take that money out of your retirement funds, it's gone and your retirement planning will suffer a serious set back.

A very good option that is available to you is to roll your current 401K over to your new employer. Now if you left the last job without a new employer either through termination or leaving to start your own business, that may not be an option. If you are looking for a new job and think you will have one in the next year or so, you can leave your 401k money where it is and transfer it later though. In that way, your 401k continues to accumulate as one fund, not many.

But a third option is to roll the 401k money into a tax sheltered privately owned retirement fund. You own this account and you usually have an investment management company helping you with the investment and protection of that money until it is time for you to retire. This is an outstanding option because that investment company works for you so you call the shots about your retirement money. And if you use this option, you can still start with a new 401k fund at your next employer knowing you have a place to put the funds in the event of another change of jobs. And that puts you in the driver's seat which is a very good feeling when it comes to retirement planning.

Planning for That Final Moment

There is a phrase people use when referring to estate planning and all the things you do as a responsible adult so when you get into retirement years, you don't have to worry about those things. That is because one of the big objectives of retirement planning is to put all of your "affairs in order" as they say so if something came up, your kids would not have to deal with it. So you go through the checklist and make arrangements for your will and your DNR or "do not resuscitate" so the medical people will know what to do in the event you cannot be brought to consciousness.

But one level of preparation for your final years of a very full life that you may not have decided about is funeral preparations. Many funeral homes sell packages where you can pay for your casket and much of the funeral expenses well in advance. This is very appealing because you can think ahead about how you would like the funeral to go and select the casket and make arrangements so there is less guesswork for your family and loved ones if the moment comes up too quickly.

That is the real appeal of preplanning all aspects of what might happen when your final moments come. You don't want to leave your children to have to try to figure out your life insurance, your estate issues, your will and your funeral if your demise comes along suddenly. Most of these preparations are pretty cut and dried and you want all the paperwork in order, legal and the person assigned to resolve your estate informed and legal so there is no time lost on getting things the way they should be if the moment were to come.

The big step of pre-buying your funeral plot, casket and paying for the funeral in advance is something to give some serious thought to. For one thing, you must be absolutely sure you are in the town where you will want to be buried. Many times later in life, a retired person wants to pack up and move to where the kids are living. That is one of the good things about begin retired and relatively unencumbered by a lot of possessions. If you are living in an assisted living center, the move is just not that difficult. So you don't want to own property, even if it's just a burial plot and have to deal with transferring all of that paperwork to another town if you do move with your kids.

But the compelling reason not to put money into a funeral arrangement package is that funeral homes are not great at managing those funds. There have been plenty of stories come out of late of mismanagement of funds buy funeral homes. Or if the company owning the funeral home is bought, many times the new company will not honor your contract with the previous owners and your relatives find this all out just when they least need to hear about problems.

A much better option is to take the same money you would have put into funeral arrangements and put it into a trust set aside just for this purpose. You can name who you want to have access to the trust and even write out in specific detail what you want the money used for and how you want the funeral to go. That form of living will or ethical will gives your relatives the resources they need to conduct your affairs and the directions you want them to have. But they have the flexibility to pick the funeral home and buy the plot that seems right at the time. The money can accrue interest and it is secure because it is still owned by the family right up until it is needed.

The desire you have to get your final arrangements arranged is a good one. But thinking through some of the problems that can come up if you do too much prearranging gives you the wisdom to make the right choices so you can enter your retirement years knowing that everything is arranged when and if, God forbid, the moment of your departure comes along.

Retirement Starts Young

It isn't too surprising that the time when we really start thinking about retirement and planning for it is middle age. Perhaps it is when we have our lifestyles pretty well defined, perhaps the career is where you want it to be and the kids are here and growing up that you start looking down the road to the future. Perhaps it is looking toward the future in terms of insurance, planning for college and other issues such as this also gets your mind moving on how you will be ready when retirement gets here.

But if we were able to step back above our lives, the best time to start preparing for retirement is not the middle age years. Retirement planning experts tell us that if young people in their twenties or even teens can start putting a little bit back toward retirement, the rewards when they reach their golden years will be phenomenal. If a youth in his early twenties or teens were to just put one percent of what they make back, and that money stayed in some form of investment vehicle that would grow into a retirement account, the growth between the time of investment and retirement at 60 or 65 can be explosive even at a modest interest rate.

Unfortunately, few young people are looking that far ahead when they are in their early adult lives. That is a time when the transition from teen years to family life is pretty all consuming. So it might be the responsibility of parents and older advisors to help youth see the value of starting to work on their retirement savings well in advance so they have a well-developed program when their retirement years come along.

One of the best places for a young person to start their retirement program is with the 401k or retirement benefits at their job. Now, in the last decade, many businesses have eliminated retirement benefits where the company pays for the retirement. But if the young person works for a company that offers 401K, they can set aside a percentage of their income and it will be put into a retirement fund before taxes. Moreover, often the company will match the funds up to dollar for dollar and the company will manage the investment of the funds as well.

The outcome is a healthy and rapidly growing fund that starts out with an immediate doubling of the invested funds and then grows steadily over the years as more is put into the fund with each paycheck. The young worker gets used to the retirement money coming out so they adjust their budget to live without it. And without giving retirement much more thought than that, within a few decades, the 401K can evolve into a very impressive retirement account to be sure.

If you are a young person and you are considering if you might think about starting a retirement account, congratulations. You are one of just a few people who have the foresight to think about retirement this early in life. And by starting now, you take advantage of the thing that is your greatest asset – time. Because if you only put a little bit back, that can grow and grow and grow and become a sizeable retirement nest egg for you and your spouse even if he or she is the spouse off in your future.

Taking Your Retirement Around the World

One of the most common dreams many people have for their retirement years is to travel. So often when you are in the middle of building a career and raising a family, your travel consists of trips to Orlando for Disney World or doing something focused on the kids. So when you get to that phase of life where your children are grown up and it's just you and your spouse, now you can focus on trips that are for just you two going places you to go and doing things you want to do.

So if you feel that you will be taking your travel life to a new level when you reach retirement age, there is plenty you can do to get ready. Obviously, you will need to focus your savings and financial preparations so you have an ample budget for travel when the time arrives. The last thing you want is to come up on the time when your dream of traveling together can be a reality only to find that you did not set aside the budget for it.

One way you can do that is to take advantage of the years between when the kids all move out and are done with college and the beginning of you retirement years. This can be as much as a ten to fifteen year time span when both of you can work to payoff bills and build that retirement nest egg. If your basic retirement fund for you to live on is healthy and you are meeting your financial retirement goals, to take one of the spouse's salary and put it all aside for future travel can result is a very healthy budget to get out and see the world in your golden years together.

It might feel like it's a little self-indulgent for you to set aside so much money for you and your spouse to have travel adventures late in life. Well, you have been a good citizen, a good dad or mom, a good worker and in every respect done the right things all these years. So nobody would deny you the joy of really enjoying the thing you love the most when you do reach your retirement years together.

You can afford a few "training trips" in the years coming up on retirement from time to time to begin to retool your travel skills. If you have been in your career a long time, you may have sufficient vacation that you can take an extra week a year just for adult travel and still have plenty to go see the kids and do all the family stuff that you must do and you enjoy so much.

It will be during these training trips that you will hone your ability to stay on the road longer each time out. Traveling for long periods of time is a developed skill. You will need to learn how to pack, how to manage your international paperwork if international travel is in your plans and how to handle jet lag as well. These are “travelers skills” that you can be developing leading up to that big moment when both partners are able to retire full time and really start getting out there and seeing the world.

Another adjustment and financial resource that can put some additional funding into your travel funds is your house. Many people sell their homes late in life when you don’t need so much space to raise kids and you no longer have the desire or take great joy in taking care of a yard and managing the upkeep on a home. If you know you are going to make this big change of lifestyle away from the home bound mom and dad and toward the world travelers you want to be, you can be preparing the house for sale in the last few years before you retire.

Because you know well in advance that you have a new life of adventure and fun ahead in your retirement years, you can use the last few years before both of you stop working to get ready. Then once your retirement is official and you walk out of the retirement party at work, you can walk right onto the jet way and take off on a brand new life of fun and adventure seeing the world together during your retirement years.

The Many Levels of Retirement Planning

The concept of retirement planning brings up the image of you working with your investment counselor or setting up your 401K so you have adequate financial resources when you retire. And it is true that a big part of being ready to retire involves being ready financially to be able to step out of the work world and start to take life easier.

But just as life is not just about making money, retirement is about so much more than having the money not to work. Preparation for retirement also means preparing to live a simpler life, preparing to become a “senior citizen” and a grandparent and preparing to look at life differently.

Your health care is going to be an important issue in your retirement years. As you enter retirement, you may be strong as an ox and active and full of health and life. But any of us can fall prey to poor health or accidents. And if your employer from whom you retired does not extend your health care insurance for you to continue your coverage past your employment, you should make other plans. You can continue the same coverage that you had under the Cobra system but that can get pretty costly and dip into your finite retirement savings pretty significantly. Medicare can be helpful too. But to be perfectly comfortable that you have coverage, look to Medicare supplement insurance so you maintain the same quality of care in retirement that you have now in the working world.

Don’t just limit your retirement planning to your money. Your retirement will be a time of a big change of lifestyle and a change to your values and how you spend your time as well. You will have more time on your hands and studies show that those who enter retirement without “an agenda” can become adrift in all that time and that isn’t healthy. Human beings are doers so even though you may no longer be working for a living, find ways to be productive and make a difference in your community. You can start finding those opportunities long before retirement so when you finally step out of the work world, expanding those hobbies and volunteer efforts is as natural as can be.

In addition to the change of where you spend your time each day, you may have even a bigger change in where you live ahead for you in retirement. Many times people who step into their retirement years find that maintaining the house where you raised the kids is just not necessary and more work than it worth. Selling the home and using the equity to finance a leisurely retirement life is a great way to go. But you should start early both preparing the home for sale and preparing the family that “grandma and grandpa’s house” is going away.

In addition, where you go to live is something that can be great fun to dream about and doing some research on just the right place. You may choose to rent a small place in an older part of town and enjoy a whole new lifestyle in that setting. Or you might go for a high-rise condo with a view of the river or a nice quiet apartment in a retirement oriented apartment complex where you and other retirees can explore this new world together.

Above all it’s important to embrace the retired lifestyle with the enthusiasm and excitement that you might greet any new opportunity. Don’t let being retired mean just not working. In fact, go through the mental and emotional exercises of putting the working world behind you and redefining yourself in this new role. You are retired now and you are a senior citizen and maybe even a grandparent.

These are not negative things. There is a strong role for grandma and grandpa in society and in your family. And the world takes great joy in a senior citizen who embraces that time of their life and sets out to be the best senior citizen they can be. If you predetermine that this is the kind of retired person you are going to be, that attitude will propel you past that sudden change of life shock and get your retired life off in running in an exciting way that will lead to many happy and fun times in your life of leisure as a retired person.

The Who, What, When, Where and Why of Retirement

In the newspaper business, when a reporter wants to find out all about a case, they always ask the big five questions which are who, what, when, where and why. If the reporter can get these basic questions answered about any story, that is considered good research.

We can use the same approach as we begin to process the idea of retirement planning. It would be a mistake to only look at retirement planning as strictly a financial step. If all retirement consisted of was a change to where you get your money, that would be one level of change. But retirement also brings with it big lifestyle changes and changes to your priorities and how you use your time. So it’s a good idea to prepare for all of the changes retirement brings by asking the big five questions.

Who will you be retiring with is a very important question because your mode of living is going to change in every way imaginable. That man or woman who has been part of your life for so many decades will now become central to every move you make when retirement puts you together every day all day. So you should think that through and decide how you want to arrange your time so both of you still have your own interests, activities and friends but you can also enjoy a new closeness that retirement affords you.

What you will be doing with your time is a huge question as you walk away from the working world. Retirement is a great time to start enjoying those hobbies that never got enough time. You can catch up on your reading, write the great American novel or take classes to learn to paint or do woodworking. See retirement as a time when the sky is the limit for you to explore your creative side.

When you retire is a big factor on how much of your retirement savings you have to have ready by a certain time. For many, dipping into the retirement savings can be postponed for years. If you get to the point that you can collect Social Security and still make a fair amount of money part time or performing some cottage industry job, you might be able to keep your retirement savings growing even for the first five to ten years of retirement. And that means a longer more prosperous retirement time frame for you and your spouse as well.

Where will you live once you settle into the place you want to call your retirement bungalow. If you plan to sell the house and buy a condo or move into an assisted living center, there is a lot of preparation for both of those steps. There isn't time like the present to begin that retirement planning by getting the house ready to sell and by getting out and researching the best retirement living options for you to consider.

Why retire is more than just a philosophical question. You may be retiring because you got to a certain age and it is required of you. But to enter retirement with a good attitude, it’s good to find your own motivations for wanting to scale back your responsibilities and enjoy some leisure time as a senior citizen. And if retirement means more time for hobbies, chances to travel or enjoy time with your spouse or greater access to those sweet grandbabies, those are great reasons to enter the life of a retired person.

But the one question we did not list that may be more than all the rest is the “how” of retirement. How you go about moving from a life of working, selling the house and getting settled in a completely new world, perhaps with new friends and new objectives for living is a major challenge for anyone especially if you have been a productive member of the business or working world for many decades.

There are a lot of levels to the “how question”. That is why in a lot of ways the period of time leading up to retirement and doing retirement planning can be as active as retirement itself. But it’s good you are getting started now because by being prepared, your transition to retirement will be smooth and as painless as possible for such a big change of life.

A Place to Settle Down With

When you are looking down the road at that new lifestyle of retirement, there is a whole new way of life to be anticipated. And that is the fun of retirement planning because, as they say, anticipation is half of the fun. And part of the preparation for retirement is looking at various retirement facilities and retirement communities that you might look to call home.

It's appropriate to use the term "retirement community" because when you are considering selling your home and moving to an assisted care facility or a senior apartment, community is just as important to you as the food and the layout of your space. So when you start that search process, it's good to know what questions to ask and how to evaluate different retirement communities against each other.

Anytime you go to "interview" the administration of a retirement community, they are going to put their best foot forward. But that's ok because you want to know what their bragging rights are all about. So in addition to discussing price and amenities, make sure you include community activities as part of the things you ask about and use to evaluate the community. One of the big advantages of moving to a senior center is that you can have a more social lifestyle then living in your home by yourself. So the retirement center must be the kind of place that facilitate a lot of social interaction so you can make friends and get out and have fun.

The layout and how the residents are interacted with by staff make a big difference for how well people get out of their apartments and enjoy their living arrangements. Take the tour of the place but don't just look the carpet and the views out of the display apartment windows. Look at how many people are out and about, how much informal communication is going on and if public spaces are available and in use on a daily basis. That is something that cannot be "staged" and you will be able to tell if the people are having fun and enjoying each other at the retirement community.

Of course there are the "brass tacks" questions you will need to go through when interviewing a possible new place to live. The facility has to be within your price range so they should be forthright about costs. But even if you can afford what they charge, there has to be value for the money. Look at the facility both for what is being offered and how well they seem to be able to fulfill their promises. Look at the physical arrangements. How old is the facility and does it seem to be in good repair?

Make it a point to talk to various staff members during your stay. If the person assigned to host you lets you talk to residents and staff but they must be present, that might indicate that they are putting on a show for you and not letting you know the real story of the facility. Make arrangements to be "cut loose" to wander the halls, talk to residents and visit staff on a surprise basis. If the staff is irritated by your attempts to communicate, always busy or cold and hostile, that is a culture issue that you don't want to be part of your new lifestyle.

A real test of a retirement community might come in giving them a test drive. If the facility owners have a guest apartment and they offer to let you stay for a few days to just sample life in the community, that is a strong statement of faith that you will find everything to your liking. By living amongst the people, you have lots of chances to eat with the residents, begin making friends and find out the real scoop on whether this is a good place to live or not.

By coming up with a strategy for looking at different retirement centers to find out what they are really all about, you will do a much better job of evaluating retirement communities. And it's worth the effort to dig a bit beneath the surface because if this place wants to be your new home, they must be able to make you retirement life happy, social and fun. Because that's the way it should be.

Avoiding Retirement Shock

Have ever talked to someone who when speaking on the subject of retirement acts like it is a death sentence? For many the idea of not working and stepping down into the life of retirement with fewer daily duties is frightening and something to dread. That is why a big part of retirement planning involves getting emotionally ready for retirement so there isn't a huge shock when all of a sudden you are a man or woman of leisure.

There is a term from the world of scuba diving that refers to a medical problem that happens when a diver returns to the surface to fast and the shift from high pressure to lower pressure of the world above the water is too fast. It's called "the bends" and it's a serious medical moment. Well, we don't want to get "the bends" when we leave the high pressure world of work and achievement for the low pressure world of retirement and a life of ease.

So to avoid retirement shock, you should start well ahead of you retirement party getting ready for that lifestyle. The worst thing you can do is wake up on the first day of your retired life with nothing to do and that feeling of emptiness and loneliness because you miss your old life and have no plans for how to fill the hours and days that lay ahead in your life as a retired person.

One way to avoid retirement shock is to do a bit of daydreaming about all the things you want to do once you are retired. Many of us put off creative interests and adventures we might have pursued except as a member of the working world, a parent an active participant in school, church and civic groups, there is just no time for that before retirement. But now that you have laid down so many of those responsibilities, give yourself permission to throw yourself into a creative hobby to let that side of you out to grow and mature.

Another great coping mechanism so the shock of moving into retirement isn't so severe is to continue to work at a reduced pace. If your employer values your decades of experience and devotion to duty, they may put you on in a part time capacity to come in and help the young people learn the ropes and learn the lay of the land of the business world. You know that landscape well so you can be of real value to make that transition a success.

Retirement is also a time when you can travel and spend more time with family and friends. If you always wished you could be available to baby-sit the grandchildren, now is the time. Your kids not only will love having free child care while they go about dealing with their busy lives but you will enjoy getting to know your grandkids and maybe being a kid with them for an afternoon as well.

Volunteering is another great way to fill all of that extra time you now have on your hands. By keeping busy helping worthy causes, you keep your self esteem because you are making a real difference in the lives of others and for your community. You can meet so many wonderful people while volunteering and the social side of it keeps you young and overcomes loneliness which is a big problem when you first enter your retirement years.

By laying out plans to enjoy a hobby, continue to work part time or volunteer when retirement starts, you can get rid of that sense of dread that you may have about your upcoming retirement. Instead start to get excited about this new phase of life and the new life that lies ahead of you in retirement.

Born to Be Wild

In the 1960s, when many who are now entering retirement age were youths, a movie called Easy Rider made quite a stir. It was the story of two young men riding motorcycles across country to discover America and enjoy the freedom of unrestrained travel.

The song that got most associated with that movie was called "Born to be Wild". This is an image of unrestrained freedom that seems to stay in our spirits even as we move through life and into our retirement years. Small wonder you may have as your retirement dream the idea of selling the house, moving into an RV and hitting the road to discover America yourself, maybe not as young hippies but with that same sprit of adventure and fun.

This is an "alternative lifestyle" that many people enjoy in their senior years. And to be fair, RV technology is so advanced that you really can enjoy virtually all of the luxuries of home but be able to rove the countryside bedding down anywhere you can find an RV hookup and some water.

But even though this exciting prospect for your retirement years scratches that itch for you to be "born to be wild", you are not so wild that you are not going to do some careful planning so you and your spouse can pull off this big change of lifestyle comfortably and safely. And because it is a big change for both of you, careful planning is in order.

Probably the biggest investment of this retirement dream is that RV itself. Fully loaded, these magnificent living centers on wheels can often cost as much as a house itself. Now one way to really get your preparations underway would be to buy the RV well in advance of retirement. You can make payments on it and plan to pay it off when you sell the house and use the proceeds to make that traveling home your own.

By buying in advance, you can take some trial run trips for a few weeks at a time and begin to get used to the lifestyle on the road. These are important trial runs because there are going to be a lot of new issues that go with staying gone virtually forever that you will need to cover so you are not being irresponsible in your wild wanderings across the landscape.

Your kids will worry about this big adventure. But if you listen closely, buried in those worried lectures they are giving you is a sense of envy and admiration that mom and dad had the courage to get out there and live their dream with their retirement years. And you can help them feel less anxious by keeping communications active on any trip. With modern cell phone technology, not only can you always stay in touch, you can text them, email them and even send them pictures from your travels for them to live the traveling lifestyle with you vicariously.

You will need to make arrangements for mail to do your banking from the road. Your retirement program and Social Security can auto-deposit in your bank back home but you will be using those funds all over the country so it will take some smart planning to stay fiscally responsible while living the free and easy lifestyle of a road warier.

One approach to organizing your finances is to do all of your financial activities through the internet. You can keep wireless communications going in the RV and be able to log into your bank accounts to make sure everything is as it should be. You can pay for most things by credit card and pay the credit card off via automated bill pay from your bank account. And by making arrangements that all of your bills be sent to you via email, you can do your budget and pay your bills all at the comfort of your laptop computer screen.

By living smart and using the best of modern technology, you can hit the road and enjoy the wide open spaces and the freedom that will make you and your spouse the “easy riders” of your time. And by living out your dream, you are doing what millions of people say they will do with their retirement years but never do. You are living life to its fullest and letting retirement be the best time of your life.

Can Your Parents Retire?

Not everybody is as good about getting ready for retirement as others. When you are growing up as children, you always had trust that mom and dad always had good control over their finances. But as we grow older, the roles of child and parent are often reversed.

When you and your brothers and sisters grew up and moved out of the house, it was natural that you would become absorbed in your new lives of raising families of your own and getting your careers established. You may know that there is coming a time when you will take on the responsibility to help your parents make that transition to retirement.

Sadly, as much as you would suspect that they did prepare for retirement, you should not take that for granted. The trials of raising a family with all the financial demands can take its toll on any budget. So it's appropriate to ask the question, can your parent retire? And if there is any doubt, you should begin looking into how you as their children can help them.

This is a natural first step toward you and your siblings being more involved in mom and dad's life as they age. Many times the toll that aging takes makes older people less able to plan and perform financial maneuvers with the same skill they had when they were raising you. Be sensitive when you are around them to find out if they can speak intelligently about their retirement and the next step along the way of living a full and rich retirement lifestyle.

One service you can offer to your parents that may be more welcome than you could imagine is for you to start helping them plan their finances and organize their money. It might be true that in many ways, your parent has already started that path into retirement. If dad has stopped working or Social Security is starting to be collected, they may be in that category. But they need some help to lay down the worries of adult life and make the transition to a lifestyle where life's worries are not such a burden and they can relax and enjoy their golden years.

You might take advantage of the sibling with the strongest financial skills and start to move the handling of your parent's accounts to a child so they can let that area of worry go. This is where you would work with your parent to get that child the Power of Attorney so they can sign on their account, pay bills and do business on behalf of their parents. And once that is all in place, an organized evaluation of your parent's retirement preparations can be most revealing.

By helping your parents simply organize the assets they may already have, they may be able to step into a much more worry free life and really start enjoying the fun and relaxed lifestyle that retirement can really mean for them. Along with organizing their finances, there is a lot the kids can do to help mom and dad get ready to become retired people not just in a financial sense but in terms of lifestyle. The biggest transition they will go through and the one they will be the most resistant about will be giving up the house and moving into an assisted living center or retirement community. But as your parents continue to age, having them somewhere that they can get care if it is needed will give everyone more peace of mind about their future.

The best approach to helping mom and dad transition to this move is to put it in the most positive of light. If they are experiencing some physical decline, they may already aware of the danger living alone in that old house might pose. You can use that to get their interest in living in a place where there is always someone to come running in the event they fall or have a medical problem.

But also emphasize the social side of living with other seniors and enjoying their company. By helping them see that retiring in every respect possible is the best thing for them, they will eventually embrace the change. And when they are happily "retired" and enjoying that life, you will know that you kids did the right thing taking good care of your parents the way they took good care of you.

Conquering the Skill of Saving for Retirement

There is no magic to getting financially ready for retirement. We all wish we could come up with some amazing way to put money back for retirement such as the famous genie in the Aladdin's lamp. But if that genie came up and we asked him for a way to get ready financially for retirement, his answer would be short and to the point – "Start Saving!".

But for millions of people in the working world, it's hard to save. You need every dime you have to pay the bills, get the kids through their dentist bills and clothes for school and have a little left over at the end of the month for matinee movie with a small popcorn. So how can we ever find a way to put money back for retirement under these circumstances?

The key to savings is to take advantage of changes in your income to start a savings program. For example when you start a new job with a new salary. Before you get used to that paycheck, set up a direct deposit of a small amount of money into a tax deferred financial fund such as an IRA. The money goes straight in there and you never see it in your paycheck. The funny thing about how we all think is that you live up to the level of money you are getting. So if you never see that $50 or $100 in your paycheck, you will adjust your lifestyle accordingly and suddenly you have a program in place to save for retirement.

You can apply the same principle to payments you may have automatically deducted from your account. If you are paying a car payment or you have a health club due taken directly out of your account, when those things come to an end, think about whether you want to see those direct withdrawals stop entirely. If you are not used to having that money in your budget, you may be able to have your bank direct deposit some or all of that amount directly into your retirement account.

Just think how great it would be if you could put a car payment a month into retirement savings. You would see a very significant amount of money build up in that account in no time. And when you start seeing the financial reports start coming in from your bank or whoever is managing your retirement funds and you see it really start to build up, the vision of a secure retirement future for you and your spouse will begin to become a reality for you.

Another fun way to build up that retirement account is to make a project of it. You and your spouse could take on the challenge to do some form of contract or temporary work every month or so and put all of that money into your retirement fund. Maybe he can go out with friends and cut wood and sell it around town for firewood. Maybe she could use her artistic skills to make original art works and sell them at the local crafts fair or flea market.

There are lots of ways each of you can find odd jobs or part time employment just to build up that fund. You can work department stores at Christmas time or sign on with Manpower and go on one day assignments every once in a while. You can even find ways to make money on the internet if you have technical skills. Tap your talents and find that work and the amazing thing is that it will be fun because this is not working extra because you are in financial trouble. It is building for a secure retirement together and making it a challenge and a game is a way of putting your creativity into the process.

Getting a Professional into the Act

Do you see planning for your retirement as your responsibility or something someone else should do for you? That is a pretty shocking question isn't it? It is the kind of question that makes it sound like if your retirement funds are under the care of your employer, that you are not being a responsible person.

Of course that is not the purpose of the question. If you have taken the step of participating in your employer's retirement program or 401K, then you are definitely showing plenty of personal reasonability for your retirement planning. But when you think about it, what happens to your 401K funds once they are given to your employer? Most of us don't know. We know that we get statements that show that what we invest is gaining in value and that the principle is safe and for us, that is often enough.

But it is easy to trust your employer that the funds are being managed well and that it all will be there when the time comes for you to use that 401K for retirement. The truth is that your employer probably has nothing to do with how well your retirement portfolio performs once the funds are taken out of your paycheck. In most cases, your employer hires a professional retirement planner who invests those funds to give you at least a modest return on investment. And that service is also taking a fee from your funds which is something that is done without giving you the chance to evaluate if they deserve the money they are making.

You have some rights when it comes to your retirement funds. So part of your rights is to see that people that work for you, such as a retirement planner, know what they are doing and are held accountable on a regular basis for the outcome of their financial management of your retirement funds. At the employer level, you probably won't fire the financial planner. But you can demand to meet with them and communicate your financial plans. You can get a name of is responsible for what happens with your money. And if you find out who they really are, you will have more success in getting them to be accountable to you.

But you may also find yourself engaging a financial planner for funds that fall outside of employer 401K plans. For example if you leave a job, you can roll your 401K into a private IRA account and engage a financial planner to invest that money so it continues to grow steadily until you need it at the time of retirement.

Develop some standards by which any retirement planner you engage must be judged. A good way to pick a good financial planner is to use people you know and trust to give you guidance. If family members or close associates already are using a good financial planner, get that person's name and phone number and schedule an interview. You can also find out if your bank, insurance company or credit union provides this service. They already work for you the good reputation of these trusted financial services people can pay off when you use them for financial planning for retirement.

Put some time and effort into researching if the retirement planner you are considering is capable and has a good reputation. They should have no trouble giving you references and documenting their success to show you that they can be trusted to take good care of your retirement funds. And if you do some up front due diligence, in the end you will be able to entrust this important resource to them knowing they are good stewards of the money that is going to give you a happy and peaceful retirement life.

Getting Rid of the Stuff

One of the things that often keeps us from mentally crossing that bridge into retirement is the sheer volume of "stuff" that you have accumulated during a life of raising kids and just buying things over several decades of family life. If the kids have moved out but you and your spouse are living in the home you have occupied for years, the layers and layers of accumulation can be tremendously intimidating to think about going through and deciding what to keep and what to give away.

Now there is no reason not to go ahead with plans to retire from your job and start that lifestyle as soon as your finances are able to let you do that and you are ready to step out of the working world. But for many of us, the real transition of becoming fully retired happens when we pare down our possessions, sell the family estate and move into a quaint bungalow, retirement apartment or assisted living center to begin enjoying a life of fewer responsibilities and a lot more fun.

The first step of taking on the challenge of how to attack the mountains of stuff is to get a rough inventory for what you have and what you can get rid of. You can start on this quest as early as you feel ready to put your retirement planning on the front burner. Many start on it as soon as they enter the "empty nest" phase of their life and the kids are gone and you can begin to convert their rooms into usable space for you and start getting their stuff out of the house as well.

So your kids are the first line of defense or rather of offense of attacking the sheer volume of stuff you own. Now is the time to start the inheritance process early. There is no doubt many things in your family possessions that the kids cherish from their upbringing in your home and that you will want to pass along to them. So let them know that over the next year or so, you are going to expect them to come along and get the stuff they want before you sell the house.

This can be a progressive process. If the kids live far off, you can use visits for the holidays to go through closets and box and ship their precious memories and mementos from their childhood years so those things can start living at their homes and not at yours. This is a big step toward getting rid of all the stuff.

Next you should start to think about the amount of space you will have in your new space and what you are going to need and use regularly when living in that smaller living quarters. Be pragmatic here so you are only looking at things from a usability point of view. On your first pass, many things will make the cut to be saved because they are either useful or nostalgic or both.

But also begin to go through the house room by room and separate things into “keep’, “give away” or “trash”. You will find lots of stuff you can give to Good Will or to charities which gives those things a new life and you a small tax write off for next year. But be brave about throwing away things that just have no real value any more. Remember, if you don’t get rid of it, you are going to be living with it for another twenty years and that is what we are trying to get away from. By giving yourself some time to get ready to move into the smaller space, this process of paring down the possessions can be rewarding and fulfilling and a good next step into your next phase of life.

Helping Your Employees Retire

You know one thing about an employee that takes interest in your company retirement program. That is that he or she is taking a proactive interest in staying with the company long enough to retire. This is not a given for every employee. It used to be in the generation that was in the workplace of the nineteen fifties and sixties that staying with a company for thirty or more years and retiring with full benefits was the norm. That is not the norm any more.

We cannot just blame the job hopping ways of employees for the change of culture away from going for the gold watch and retiring in a company. From the corporate side, so many companies have eliminated retirement packages entirely that there is a strong belief of "do it yourself" retirement in the working population.

A company offers retirement benefits for employees for one purpose. That is to aid with retention. When you have a pool of talented, well trained and energetic employees, that is a corporate resource. So if you can keep those employees all the way through to retirement, that is a real value to any corporate entity.

So if your company does offer these benefits to your employees, its important that you take advantage of them in more ways then just sponsoring them. A retirement package for aging employees sends a message to the employees that the company cares about them and about their families. And this may be true in your company that you have a corporate culture of being involved with your employees at a personal level and maintaining that "we are family" feeling for people who work for you. If that is the case, it makes sense that you would extend that feeling to care for the retirement planning of any employee that you have that shows signs of being a long term value to the company.

You should highlight the company retirement package as early as the interview with your prospective employees. Remember that an interview is about more than you looking for qualified people. It is also about qualify people interviewing you. And that is exactly where the value of a strong retirement package is of greatest value. If a job hunter who is looking for a place to work that they can retire at knows that you have a good plan to help them with their retirement planning, that will draw the brightest and best to your HR department.

Your HR department should not let the retirement issues of employees lie idle for very long at all. The more you help your employees plan for and participate in a retirement program, the happier they will be and the more engaged in their work they will be. Hold regular retirement planning meetings to have employees review their level of participation in the program. This is where you will put in front of the employees your most empathetic HR employees to show genuine interest in the employee's retirement issues.

Above all be sure to show particular concern and caring for aging employees. And when an employee finally crosses over into retirement, throw a party and go out of your way not only for the company to help the employee transition to retirement but to demonstrate to all employees that the company lives up to its claims to be faithful to employees all the way into retirement. In an economy where so many companies throw people away, your employees will notice that this is not that kind of company. And your faithfulness to retiring employees will result in a rich crop of faithfulness from ongoing employees who stand behind you because you stand behind them from the day they start work in the company all the way through to retirement.

How Much Will You Need to Retire?

There are levels of preparedness when it comes to looking down the road at your retirement and how much you will need when you get there. The basic level of retirement planning is to sign up for your 401k at work, support legislation to keep Social Security intact, buy some life insurance and let it go at that. This system will work so there is reason to call this bad retirement planning. After all, if you began preparing for retirement in your early adult life and stayed with it, you will have a resource to retire on and that's a good thing.

But there is a way to take it to the next level and that is to actually start putting some flesh and bones on your vision of your retirement and get a feel not only for the fact that you will retire but how you expect to live in retirement. Very often, we have idealistic visions of retirement life based on media images or the fantasy life of living in luxury and having little to do but golf in the morning and drink campaign and eat caviar all afternoon. So if you can get a realistic view of what you have as your expectations for retirement, you can start making adjustments to your retirement planning package right now.

Start with how you see your retirement lifestyle working. If you want little more than a manageable retirement apartment, a cat and the chance to knit or watch ESPN without interruption, that is a fairly modest retirement lifestyle to prepare for. But other people have adventure and high living in their retirement dreams. So if world travel or living in a luxury setting is part of that dream, only one person is going to make that dream a reality and that is you.

An exercise that is fun and eye opening is to detail every aspect of your dream life in retirement. Start by picturing your living conditions. Include your diet needs and wants as well as any entertainment and recreational needs you expect to be a part of retirement. For example, if you know you will want to go on long fishing adventures several times a year, you will need a RV and the finances to support taking off for the most scenic spots within driving distance to kick back and enjoy the fishing. So include the physical and financial needs for that lifestyle in this "detail" step of retirement planning.

You can complete the exercise by getting to such a level of detail that you could go out and price the dream in today's dollars. Then when you take your "dream retirement shopping list" out into the open markets and use retail locations, catalogs and internet sites to actually find out how much it would cost to have that retirement today, that will shed a lot of light on your retirement preparations that you are doing.

Now, the actual cost of those different components will be much higher when you actually get to the point of retirement. You could try to factor in inflation and make those kinds of adjustments but don't play with the formula so much that you get the idea that it's impossible and give up. However, another factor that offsets the inflation factor is that your retirement life will be less expensive then your current lifestyle. Your daily needs may not be as demanding. If you sell your house after paying off the mortgage, your monthly expenses will go way down and you will have a significant surge of retirement capital that will come from the sale of the house. And you are not raising kids, putting them through college or having to support the lifestyle and wardrobe of a working person. All of these things offset the inflation issue.

Scaling Back the Farm

When you are in the middle of your years of raising a family, there is nothing like owning your own home to make that experience rewarding. So if you bought a home with the conventional yard, fence, neighbors, dog and all of the trappings of suburbia, you no doubt have many happy memories that you had "back at the farm" as you may have called it. Many people even go so far as to name their home something like "Happy Acres" to give their homestead even more personality and add that sense of ownership to it.

Probably to your kids, the house you raised them in will forever to your home and the idea of anyone else living in it is heresy of the worst kind. But as you begin to move toward retirement age, you may see the value in selling that home and getting into something smaller, cozier and with less overhead.

Retirement doesn't always mean moving into a nursing home or retirement center. You may have many happy years ahead of you where you are plenty able to get around and have no need of "assisted living". But selling the house as you enter into your retirement years makes a lot of sense for a lot of good reasons.

For one thing, you may have that house paid off and there may be a lot of equity in that home that you can use to get into a cozy little condo or apartment and have plenty of money left over to pad your retirement savings or afford a bit of travel with your spouse. If your home can finance some of the trips you have been dreaming of all these years, that is a good payback for being so careful with your money during your working years.

You can take a one time tax exemption that we all are allowed to use which permits you to sell the house and not have to pay taxes on the proceeds even if you don't sink the money into another house. That means that all of that equity money is sitting there waiting for you to put it to work. While you cannot sell your memories, if the house isn't serving your needs as a family any more, why bother with it?

Many times when you get done raising the kids and no longer are tied down to a job, it might be time for you and your spouse to get out there and enjoy life and travel. Retirement is often a time to get rid of a lot of your material possessions and get lose to get out and enjoy your freedom and see some of the world that you couldn't do when you were raising children. But if you live in a small place that is not difficult to lock up and walk away from, you have the freedom that you always dreamed of when you thought of the word "retirement".

Another great reason to get out of your house as you move toward retirement is that a house with a yard and all of the other trappings of ownership is a constant ownership problem. You are responsible to fix the fence, get the plumbing fixed, grow a yard, a garden and keep up the house year in and year out. If you sell the place and rent or move into a smaller place such as a condo, a huge amount of that maintenance if not all of it disappears. Now when the appliances break down, just call "the super" and let them deal with it. You deserve to have those worries taken off of your back. That is what retirement is all about.

So getting rid of the homestead might be a great idea for your retirement planning. But be prepared for the move and the work that getting the old place ready will entail. You didn't clutter that place up in a week and you won't get out of it that fast either. But by going through your stuff and streamlining your life now, that is something your kids won't have to do later. And when you are moved out and another young family is getting started in your old homestead, you can congratulate yourself on a great move to put yourself in a perfect place to enjoy a happy and fun retirement with the love of your life.

The Hidden Dangers of Retirement

We can all remember a time when we took the children to some event or theme park that was supposed to be “totally awesome”. Then when the kids get there and see that Mickey Mouse is a guy in a suit and that the rides are about the same as the local Six Flags, an inevitable let down and disappointment sets in. And that is no fun for the parents on the trip home when all of those expectations did not come to pass when the kids came face to face with reality which did not line up with their dreams and hopes.

But sometimes even adults can be guilty of letting dreams and images of a golden time ahead get the best of us. We often develop a mythology of how retirement will be when we get there and when that retired life actually starts, there are some real, down to earth adjustments that need to be made. So if you can know some of the hidden dangers of retirement in advance, it is so much better to go into retirement with your eyes open and have realistic expectations.

There are two negative reactions to the sudden shift of lifestyle in retirement. They are loneliness and boredom. Even if you are going to be home all the time, there is no question that once you stop going to an office or having regular responsibilities, you can often feel a sense of loss and grief because you miss the people, the regular human contact and the fun of being out and that can result in loneliness that can get pretty chronic.

For men especially the feeling of boredom can also set in pretty fast when the challenge of the work world goes away. In a lot of cases, men live for their jobs and when that world goes away, there is a sense of disorientation and not knowing what to do with themselves that is disconcerting for the family and for the retired man himself. You may have been looking forward to a less stressful life only to find that it was the stress that makes you tick and without it, you feel adrift in life with no direction or goals.

Both of these problems can be addressed by not letting your retirement life be to idle, at least not at first. You can fill your life up with volunteering, getting busy with family or by getting involved socially with other retired people. One area of volunteering that can go a long way to replace the gratification of the work place is to work with habitat for humanity to help build homes for people who cannot afford a home any other way. Both retired married partners can find ways to pitch in and it gets you out with people doing things that are worthwhile.

Give yourself time to get used to the idea of retirement and to the new lifestyle. It should be a simpler lifestyle because your responsibilities are reduced and you have more time on your hands. Be aware that if you and your spouse are suddenly around each other every day and every hour of the day, that is going to create new stresses which can also qualify as a hidden danger of retirement. By being aware that this is not the fault of either spouse but a natural reaction. The best response is just to get out and do things separately and create that natural space you are both used to more often.

There will be a natural down time when you first retire and treat the first month like vacation. But don't stay on vacation. Let your ambition and zeal for life find new outlets. It will be fun and exciting to see where it takes you and that is what retirement is all about.

Turning that Mortgage Around

Your house that you bought so many years ago represents one of the biggest investments of your life. By the time you approach retirement, if you have stuck with it, you may well have that house paid off. And with appreciation, that home may be worth twice or three times what you paid for it and you have all the equity from those years of house payments. Therefore, in addition to the joy you have had living in that house and raising your family there, that house is also can be a big part of your retirement planning as well.

It used to be that to take advantage of that equity when you enter retirement, you either had to sell the house and go live in a nursing home or retirement community or you took out a new mortgage borrowing against the equity and you find yourself paying huge interest payments all over again.

But a new kind of mortgage called the "reverse mortgage" is now available so a senior citizen who is preparing for retirement can begin to realize some of that equity as capital and not have to take on a loan payment or move out of their home. This innovative new program allows you to set up the equivalent of a home equity loan but instead of getting a huge lump sum, you can have the equity sent to you in the form of monthly payments so the equity of your home can actually become part of your monthly budget to supplement Social Security or other retirement funds.

What is great about the reverse mortgage type of financial vehicle is that you are never required to pay back the loan of the money that is based on your equity. The only time that loan amount would be required of you would be if you moved, sold the house or passed away in which case the sale of the house would realize the equity to retire the loan. In other words, if you take out $100,000 from your home for medical costs or just to finance a comfortable retirement living, you are not called upon to pay back that money and you can continue to live in the house for as long as you want to.

This is a phenomenal arrangement that seems tailor made for senior who want to enjoy their retirement years without financial worries and do so living in the house where they raised their children and a home that has become so precious to them. For children of a retiring parent, the reverse mortgage is a godsend because mom or dad can stay in their own home where they are happiest. And if they can keep the old homestead, the whole family will continue to enjoy coming to visit there, seeing the grandkids run and play in the same yard they grew up in and having holidays there as well.

Like some of the best programs for retiring persons, the reverse mortgage was originally put together by the US. Department of Housing and Urban renewal. It isn't often that the government gets something right but they hit one out of the ball park with the reverse mortgage. It is a program and provides federally insured funds to seniors so they can supplement their income in a safe way that allows them to use the equity of their home for their retirement comfort without ever having to give up that home. And because the money coming out of a reverse mortgage is technically a loan, you never have to pay taxes on that money which is another big financial blessing.

The reverse mortgage is an option worth considering as part of retirement planning. It gives seniors one more option for keeping their homes. And that is good for everybody.

Your Financial Future Is In Your Hands

All of us have one big transition facing us not that far down the road. Of course life is all about transitions. We make a transition from childhood to adolescence. We transition from being a child of a house to adulthood and independence. And we make big transitions through marriage, parenthood and even becoming a grandparent. But of all of these, maybe the one we need to focus on in terms of preparation is the big transition to retirement.

Moving from the world of work and the active life that all that entails to retirement and your golden years is a huge adjustment for people. There are lifestyle changes, changes to your goals and priorities and even in how people view you. But the changes to your finances are perhaps the ones you will notice the most. When you move from getting a steady paycheck to living on your Social Security and retirement, that is a major shift in your expectations and how you plan your life.

The saddest thing we see when it comes to people in late middle age are those who are depending on Social Security to be the sole means of their support in retirement. While Social Security is a fine program, it has created a false illusion of "security" that somehow the government will take care of you in your old age. The "brass tacks" truth is that if you are depending on any outside agency to be your means of support in your retirement years, your assurance that you will be conformable in your retirement years is not assured.

Even if you are currently working at a job that has a retirement program or a 401K that you put some into, you may still be allowing yourself to "depend" on your job to be there for you when you get to retirement age. And the horror stories of the elderly who finally arrive at retirement age to discover that what they thought they could depend on was not reliable are tragic.

This is why starting now to prepare for you financial future will be the best way you can be absolutely sure you will have what you need as you enter that time when you should be able to relax and enjoy the fruit of your labors. This is a major attitude shift and if you can accomplish it and take charge of your financial future, you will approach retirement with much greater confidence.

The outcome of your decision to take charge of your retirement will be that you won't just let money get put away for you without any oversight on your part. You cannot always trust that the managers of your retirement account at work are handling the money correctly. By staying on top of how those funds are being invested and doing all you can to direct where those funds go, you are making sure that you get maximum return on your investment all along the way. And when it's time for you to need those funds, you will be ready to use them because you are acutely aware of their value.

We cannot control Social Security and there is a chance it will be there for you when it's time for you to retire. But instead of depending on Social Security, build a financial future that is secure whether it is there or not. Then when you retire and your retirement packages begin to kick and give you that lifestyle of leisure and financial safety that you want, if you do see Social Security add a few dollars to your monthly funds, so much the better.

By taking control over your financial future, you are putting the security of your funds and the planning that you will have what you need when those wonderful years come along. You are depending on the one person you know is in turn with what you will need and has always been abler to plan and provide for yourself and your family and that is you. It's a good feeling to put the management of your financial future in your own hands in preparation for retirement. But it's a wonderful feeling you worked hard to enjoy so you deserve it.

What are IRAs?

With all the three letter names floating around our society what is one more? Really? It's not like we don't have enough to worry about without adding this burden. However, when it comes to real life, these three letters will have a greater noticeable affect on people than many of the other three letter names that we here on a regular basis such as the CIA, FBI, NSB, ATF, and countless other abbreviations that are hidden behind three little letters. The good news is that an IRA isn't nearly as insidious as its name would imply. This is a useful tool to most Americans who hope to someday retire from their life of work and life out a somewhat comfortable existence.

There are actually many different IRAs, which is the abbreviation for individual retirement account.

A Traditional IRA is the most common. The only requirement for this particular IRA is that you are employed and that you invest no more than 100% of your income or $4,000 per year, whichever is greater up to the age of 49. At the age of 50 your maximum investment is 100% of your income or $5,000 whichever happens to be greater. If you meet the requirements of the IRS to their satisfaction your contributions to your traditional IRA will be tax deductible. As a result, the funds are not taxed while in your IRA account but once the funds are withdrawn they are subject to federal income taxes.

This is not necessarily a bad thing, particularly for those who plan to be in a lower tax bracket when the funds are withdrawn. However, there is a growing number of people who are interested in the benefits that Roth IRAs and similar funds present by paying the taxes now when the rates are known rather than risk an even higher rate of taxation in the future, even in a lower tax bracket. The best advice I can give is to discuss the matter thoroughly with your financial planner and listen to their advice.

This is a case where only you can ultimately decide which decision is best for your needs but he or she can provide valuable guidance. You should also keep in mind that though laws favor non-taxation for Roth contributions that could change between now and the time you are ready to withdraw your funds, which will have you paying double taxes on those funds and is the primary reason that many people elect to stick with Traditional IRAs instead.

There are several distinct disadvantages to the traditional IRA funds. One of those would be the requirements in order to qualify for tax deductions. First of all, if you have the opportunity to invest in another retirement option through your employer you must be below a certain income level in order to qualify for the tax deduction. If you do not meet that qualification all the funds that are deposited into your IRA fund are subject to federal income tax. You will need to seriously discuss your stock buying strategies before determining if this is the best choice for you as those who buy and hold tend to be penalized when it comes to capital gains.

As things are currently, a Roth IRA is often preferable as the money isn't immediately tax deductible but not only is the investment not taxed upon withdrawal but neither are the gains that were earned on the investment. Another serious setback when it comes to the traditional IRA is that you are required to begin receiving payments at age 70.5. As we are seeing more and more people work well beyond the traditional retirement age this is becoming more and more of an issue.

There are advantages and disadvantages to traditional IRAs. It is important that you decide which of these you are prepared to live with and which you would rather live without. These differences will matter a great deal when retirement comes. Take the time to discuss your goals for the future with your financial advisor and see what he or she recommends.

Common 401(k) Mistakes

Believe it or not there are many mistakes that can be made along the way when it comes to financial retirement savings and investing. Unfortunately a good many of these mistakes center around the 401(k), which can be a tremendous boost to your retirement plans when used properly in order to build your portfolio. The problem is that the mistakes are often the only things we hear when it comes to retirement plans and investing. I suggest begin with the mistakes so that we can move along to better information and advice in the near future.

The first and perhaps largest mistakes that people make when it comes to 401 (k) plans is not signing up. Yes you heard that right. What people do not understand is that this is something your employer offers so that you can have some security for your future. It is a manner of saving money for your future that shouldn't be overlooked or taken for granted. Even a bad 401 (k) plan is better than no 401 (k) and with strict regulations those are few and far between. More importantly, if your company offers to match the funds in your 401 (k) plan not taking them up on that offer is literally tossing money in the garbage can.

The next big mistake when it comes to your 401 (k) is risking too little. Rewards come with risk. If you aren't taking any risks with your investment then you are by and large throwing money down the drain. In addition to that, it is nearly impossible to meet your retirement goals without taking some risks, and some hits along the way. This doesn't mean you should be reckless but along the way you are going to need to take some calculated risks in order to receive the bigger payouts that most of us hope for when investing in their retirement funds.

Risking too much. There are many risks involved when investing in the stock market. There are a few that deserve a little more mention than others. First of all, stocks present a fairly large risk, particularly to the uninitiated. While it is true that great rewards are most often the product of great risks you do not want to risk the bulk of your retirement by investing it all in stocks. Another thing you want to avoid doing if at all possible is investing in your company stock. We've seen too many lives destroyed when companies go under taking the financial stability of their employees along with them. Many companies offer incentives to employees for investing in their stock, which may be tempting but I recommend investing as little as possible in your company stock whenever possible as this could lead to problems down the road.

Finally, the worst thing you can do for the health of your 401 (k) is borrow against it. There are so many ways in which this could go wrong and the penalties for this are more than a little prohibitive. They are designed to be that way so that you will use the funds for their intended purpose. If you absolutely have no other option is the only way I would recommend borrowing against your 401 (k) and I would seriously consider selling a kidney before doing that.

When it comes to your financial retirement, 401 (k) mistakes can be far more costly than you may realize. Work to avoid these common mistakes and you should be well on your way to a successful retirement.

This guide tries to shed some light on the subject of retirement. We have covered lots of worries and questions that we are asked frequently.

The question that we are most frequently asked is how you can hedge your retirement against this current global economic turmoil. The answer from us is always the same.

The best and safest financial vehicle you can use to retire comfortably and secure your money is choosing a precious metals IRA company.

Because this is a very specific matter we have dedicated an entire online page to this aspect.

This information is top-notch and it has just been released from inside our gold mastermind and coaching program.

I highly encourage you to go to http://goldiraforinvestors.com/ to discover how to choose the right precious metals IRA company with our free online research report.

CLICK HERE TO GO TO HTTP://GOLDIRAFORINVESTORS.COM/

To your success,