

## The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

### Retirement Can Sometimes Bring Relationship Issues

from the American Counseling Association

Retirement is something most couples look forward to. It can mean more free time and the chance to do more things you've both been anticipating.

But sometimes retirement can bring changes that add significant stress to a marriage. One reason is that many people fail to realize that retirement means more than simply not working. Retirement usually brings major changes not just to the retiree, but to his or her spouse as well.

One such change is the loss of identity that often comes with leaving a job. Upon retirement, you are suddenly no longer a "teacher," or "department manager," or whatever job description that you probably had for several years. Since our society tends to value work and job titles, when you're no longer working it's not uncommon to feel a sense of diminished self-worth because you are no longer "doing something of value."

The result can sometimes be serious depression, especially for someone who has been dedicated to a job and hasn't developed many friends or interests outside the workplace. Such depression can bring health problems and certainly add stress to a marriage and possibly lead to meaningful relationship issues.

Retirement financial stresses can also be a source of marital stress. For most people, retirement income seldom matches those old work paychecks, yet expenses of travel or medical issues might be significantly higher.

Even the extra time together that retirement makes possible can be a source of stress. Someone newly retired may interrupt the established daily routine of his or her spouse, expecting to be the center of attention now that going to work is behind him or her. In some cases that extra time together may highlight marriage problems that were more easily ignored when work kept the couple separated for much of the day.

Retirement doesn't always bring stress and problems to a marriage. Most couples handle retirement and the changes it brings extremely well. But if there are warning signs that retirement is putting a strain on your relationship, seek help if the problems are serious.

There are professional counselors who specialize in retirement and relationship issues. The ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org) can help you find a professional counselor through the "Find A Counselor" tab at the top. What they have to offer can help make possible a relationship in which the partners are not just retired, but also happy and satisfied.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

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