



The challenge of retirement...

Expectations and realities for men

On Geoff's coffee table sat a bundle of retirement brochures filled with glossy pictures of cruises, caravans, and couples strolling along a beach.

As he stared at them blankly, Geoff felt an unexplainable sense of emptiness. He had completed his list of 'all the things I'm going to do when I retire' in the first two years. He had travelled with his wife, painted the house, and knocked over the list of odd jobs. Now there was no clear direction for his future and he was starting to ask himself, 'What's next?'

While some men approach retirement with gusto, many others like Geoff, struggle. Whether you spent years planning for retirement, or found yourself made

redundant early, the emotional impact of retirement is often unexpected. It can be a shock to realise that the busy days, structured routines and familiar faces all stop very suddenly once the job ends.

Retirement can trigger a range of emotions, some of which can lead to depression, anxiety, anger and suicidal thoughts. With one man over 65 committing suicide every day in Australia, retirement can present many challenges.

Retirement realities

Many men are emotionally unprepared for the loss of their stable work routine and the sense of purpose it carried. They find themselves struggling to identify who they are now that their career has ended.

They might have carefully planned their careers for the past 40 years or more, but now they are in retirement, which could last almost as long, they realise they have not contemplated how they will feel about their new life.

Most men consider the financial impact of retirement a necessity for retirement planning, but few realise that planning for the emotional impact of retirement and the changes that it brings, is just as vital.



Common retirement realities

Men frequently associate their self-worth and purpose in life with their jobs. However, when their career ends many lose their identity, sense of contribution and achievement. They begin to feel no longer valued for their skills and abilities and their confidence can suffer. These hardships are often unspoken, yet quite common.

Feeling lost

For decades, work has provided men daily challenges, boundaries, rules, structure, routines and defined roles. For many, it has given them a reason to get out of bed every day. The sudden loss of work can leave many feeling lost.

As many transition to retirement, there is much new-found free time to be enjoyed. However, with a lack of meaningful things to do, men can start to feel restless and depressed about life. Feelings of disappointment, irritability and frustration of no longer being in control is common. When their job ends, men can easily lose their identity, self-esteem and self-confidence which may lead to depression and illness.

A sense of disconnection

Many men see work as a definition of themselves, and their sense of value is often based on their career achievements. When men retire, they often reflect on this and wish they could keep connected to the roles they were loyal to. The reality is, the job you had will carry on without you, things will change after you leave, and new staff won't recognise you. This feeling of disconnection can be confronting.

Losing your social network

Work is where men find male friendships, camaraderie, and an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas. Without work, this social network is lost. This is not uncommon.

While women tend to develop social relationships more easily than men, and often have a more active social life outside of the home, relying on them for your social life is not the answer. Some retired men get angry as their wives get busily enjoying new things.

Relationship challenges

Talk to your spouse or partner about what you expect from them when you are retired. You might have very different ideas about how to spend your time together. Divorce rates increase and peak after five years of retirement so it's important to communicate and plan together what your retirement will look like.

Depression in retirement

While retirement can be wonderful, it can be a time when enormous changes are taking place which become more difficult to cope with. From time to time everyone 'gets the blues', or feels irritable, listless, angry or despondent. However, when these feelings are prolonged you may be suffering from depression. If you are feeling this way, it is ok to seek help – talk to your peers, family, doctor or contact a group like us. It is more common than you think.

**Make your retirement
a satisfying chapter
of your life.**

"Two years into retirement, the wheels fell off. Retirement is not just about financial planning and a bucket list. I wish I knew about the real impact of retirement earlier."

- Terry



Planning for a successful retirement

Retire from work, don't retire from life. By planning early, you can continue to have a fulfilling life and take control of your own emotional and physical well-being. Here are some tips to get you started.

- ① If you are getting ready to retire, give serious thought to how you will **SPEND YOUR TIME MEANINGFULLY**. Think about transitioning to part-time work, and get involved in new things before your retire.
- ② **HAVE A DISCUSSION WITH YOUR PARTNER** to make sure your retirement vision aligns. Spend time together, but also make time for yourself.
- ③ When you retire, it is normal to **TAKE TIME TO ADJUST**. The transition period can feel daunting and overwhelming, and produce a sense of loss as you close the chapter of your work life.
- ④ **GET INVOLVED WITH A NETWORK** like ours, where you can find new friendships, trust, understanding and support.
- ⑤ **CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING** and sharing your skills and life experiences with others. List who in your community you may be able to share your time and lifetime of experience with, and contact them.
- ⑥ **TRY SOMETHING NEW**. Is there something you're interested in, but never had the chance? Make it happen.
- ⑦ **WRITE A NEW BUSINESS CARD** for your retirement e.g. volunteer, artist, traveller, community driver, club member, gardener or mentor.
- ⑧ **FIND A WAY TO KEEP CONNECTED** with family, new and old friends, and with your community. It's tough finding a new network. Try as many new groups as you can e.g. instead of just reading, join a library. Got an interest, join a club and help out.
- ⑨ **PLAN TO STIMULATE YOUR BRAIN**. The saying is true, if you don't use it, you lose it.
- ⑩ **TAKE ACTION ON YOUR PLAN AS SOON AS YOU RETIRE**. Many men will tell you there is a honeymoon period with retirement, often two years before the novelty wears off. If you sit in a chair waiting for it to happen, over time it will erode your confidence making it very hard to pick yourself up.



You define your retirement experience

Retirement is a shift away from a working life, but not a shift away from life itself!

The personal qualities, natural abilities and skills that you developed over your working career don't end just because work has stopped.

Maybe you were competent in mentoring new employees or known as a reliable communicator? Perhaps you have a natural ability to solve problems? Those same feelings of importance, contribution and benefit that you experienced in your job, can also be found in new life experiences.

Finding out where you can put these valuable skills to good use is part of the challenge and reward of this new phase.



At TOMNET we create networks of retired men who genuinely care about the welfare of each other. TOMNET provides a sense of belonging. We hold weekly gatherings, events, interest groups and barbecue services. We also run volunteering programs and provide professional support.

TOMNET is about retired men supporting each other through hidden hardships to improve their mental health and well-being, and prevent suicide. Through rediscovering fulfilling lives, TOMNET men regain purpose, the ability to connect, and contribute to the community.

5 ways TOMNET supports older men in the community

Members provide peer support to:

- 1 Male residents in aged care facilities
- 2 Isolated, at risk older men through home visits
- 3 Isolated Members through telephone support
- 4 New and established Affiliate Groups
- 5 Disadvantaged youth by sharing skills and mentoring

We are gratefully supported by:



Australian Government



While DDWMPHN is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, the information provided in this brochure does not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government and is not advice that is provided, or information that is endorsed, by the Australian Government. The Australian Government is not responsible in negligence or otherwise for any injury, loss or damage however arising from the use of or reliance on the information provided within.

"There are many circumstances why we come here. It's a great thing to be involved in. I love every second of it."

– Peter

Where to go for help

TOMNET Toowoomba
223 Hume Street
Toowoomba, Qld 4350

PO Box 7801
Toowoomba South, Qld 4350

Phone: 07 4638 9080
Email: admin@tomnet.org.au

www.tomnet.org.au

TOMNET has affiliate groups in Toowoomba, Brisbane, Bundaberg, Crows Nest, Goondiwindi, Highfields, Inglewood, Millmerran, Mt Gravatt, Oakey, Roma and Tara.

If you are thinking about suicide or experiencing a personal crisis, help is available.

**FOR IMMEDIATE CRISIS
HELP 24 HOURS A DAY,
CALL LIFELINE 13 11 14**

**CALL 000
(EMERGENCY SERVICES)
IF LIFE IS IN DANGER**