



Wealth, Relationships and Life's 3rd Stage

A wealth of relationships, not monetary wealth is the key to a long happy third stage of life. Making a successful transition to the last third of your life can be a complex puzzle. Most of what's written about this transition and retirement is the need for financial resources and a financial plan. However while having a financial wealth plan is important, having a wealth of relationships is the most important determinant of a long happy life.

A report of the [Harvard Study of Adult Development](#) found that

“Close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives. Those ties protect people from life’s discontents, help to delay mental and physical decline, and are better predictors of long and happy lives than social class, IQ, or even genes.”

One's work is often tied to one's relationships. In fact, many of our clients point to their work as a major source of their personal relationships. When they leave their work, they often leave these relationships. As a result, many of us are faced with the challenge of losing a source of important relationships just when relationships are key to our health, happiness and long lives. Although many relationships can be replaced, finding new communities to join, identifying new relationships takes time and emotional effort.

In addition to work relationships, other relationships especially with one's spouse are key to a long and healthy life. Unfortunately, at the same time we may be losing our work relationships, “late-life divorce (also called ‘silver’ or ‘gray’ divorce) is becoming more common, and more acceptable. In 2014, people age 50 and above were twice as likely to go through a divorce than in 1990. [For those over 65, the increase was even higher.](#)”

One reason given for the rise in late-life divorce is that people are asking,

“Is this what I want for the rest of my life.” For example, “let’s say you’re 50 or 60. You could go 30 more years. A lot of marriages are not horrible, but they’re no longer satisfying or loving. They may not be ugly, but you say, ‘Do I really want 30 more years of this?’”

Renegotiating one's relationship with one's spouse or partner is a key component of designing the next stage of one's life. For many of us our marriage is the one or one of the most important relationships of our adult lives. As one or both make significant changes in their lives, it is natural to renegotiate the relationship.

For some, this may require counseling, but a good start is to use the approach of [Dorian Mintzer](#), have a BLAST. Start with the "B" and don't let blaming get in your way. Listen without interrupting your spouse. Agree to disagree if the conversation is getting heated. Set a safe space for your discussions. Take the time to talk without distractions.

She also suggests some things to consider as you discuss the next stage in your life are:

- At what age you want to retire?
- How you can talk about your retirement finances without fighting?
- Where do you want to live?
- Is having time together and time apart important to both of you?
- Do you have shared values and know what's important to each other?

Our work at "[Design What's Next](#)" guides you as you identify relationships that are most important now and those that will be most impacted by your next transition. Where appropriate, we help you renegotiate those that are key a long and happy life. We support you in letting go of what's ended or ending, we guide you through a journey in which you identify new directions with energy and engagement, and we help you create a plan to get there.

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