

# Retiring? Talk with spouse about concerns

**I'm about to retire, and my husband retired two years ago. Although we have a great relationship, I'm a little concerned about being together 24/7. What advice do you have for us so we don't get on each other's nerves?**

Since you describe your marriage as a strong one, the good news is you already have a great head start. Some of the research on marital relationships has found that retirement tends to magnify the relationship already in place: happy couples who share common interests tend to have a positive experience after retirement, while couples who are already dissatisfied with their marriage tend to experience additional problems.

Still, this will be a big change for both you and your husband. It's likely he has established some routines at home while you're at work, and he may feel they are being disrupted after you retire. Both of you may have certain expectations that, if not clearly communicated and acted upon, may lead to disappointment and disagreements.

Ohio State University Extension offers a fact sheet, "Marriage After Retirement," free to download at <http://ohioline.osu.edu/ss-fact/0212.html>. It offers some red flags to be aware of, as well as some guidance, including:

- **Communicate openly.** As in any relationship, good communication is essential. Start now: Talk about your expectations from a personal perspective — what you hope to do and accomplish as an individual — but also as a couple. Be sure to



talk about how you envision interacting on a day-by-day basis as well as goals you might have in mind far into the future.

- **Set boundaries.** Everyone — even if you're a happily retired spouse — needs some personal time. Both you and your husband will need to find new ways to establish that for yourselves. Many couples find it's critical to establish a balance between "separateness" — personal privacy, pursuing individual hobbies, spending time with friends — and "togetherness" — participating in joint activities, maintaining intimacy, socializing as a couple. You'll need to talk about these issues as they arise: Don't let things get to a boiling point before you bring them up.

- **Designate household tasks.** Deciding on who does what household chores in retirement is more important than many couples realize. Research shows a common source of conflict for retired couples surrounds the division of labor in the home. Since he has been retired for a couple of years, your husband may have picked up some of these duties — and might anticipate you'll start doing them when you retire. Or, he may feel you're encroaching on the way he does things if you do try to pick them up. Again: Talk it out. Don't make assumptions.

The "Marriage After Retirement" fact sheet offers additional advice. Review it and you may find your path to retirement is a happy one.

*Family Fundamentals* is a monthly column on family issues. It is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to *Family Fundamentals*, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).



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