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Between 55 and 64 Years Old?

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If you are between 55 and 64, you are in the biggest group of baby boomers, 9.8 million in California alone! The youngest Baby Boomer turns 50 this year. Some of you plan on working till 70 and many of you want to retire early because of plans to have a second "passion" career, to travel, to focus on a hobby or even to go back to school. Having an ill spouse, health challenges of your own or caring for an aging parent might derail your idea of life at this stage. Disappointment, frustration, and grief can turn to depression, which can negatively affect your health; it is good to have a plan so that these "pot holes" on the road of life don't completely stop you.

In order to prepare for a longer life and keep a balance between the "need-to-do and the want-to-do," my colleagues and I continue to do consultations with those approaching retirement, downsizing and/or those who are in caregiving roles. Without a plan, one can be sucked up into a "vortex" of duties and obligations while not re-fueling the passions of the mind and heart.

A professional consultation with a certified professional care manager - who is a coach, resource and advocate - can assist individuals with designing a plan for now that includes the what-if's of the future, as well as all the options available to make this a productive phase of life. All of this while factoring in activities to keep one's mind and

body healthy.

These are some of the areas covered in a consultation:

Your health or that of a family member. How to plan for changes or how to manage someone you love with the right approaches, resources and care. Where to get evaluations and/or second opinions.

Legal tools you need and the language you might want in your legal documents so you do have life "your way" even if you lose capacity. This includes "end-of-life" planning way before you think it is needed.

Options for housing that cover everything from staying home with the support of the Lamorinda Village (www.lamorindavillage.org) to moving to a Life Care Community that will support your needs at every level.

Desires of the heart and mind - assisting you in finding avenues to pursue your dream.

Weaving in new opportunities for volunteerism. Studies show that volunteerism can lengthen life and actually be a "pain reliever."

Educating you on activities and lifestyles that include "mindfulness" in order to preserve and enhance your health. Research shows that those who engage in such activities have reversed some serious health issues as well as reduced the stresses of everyday life.

Financial Planning - or knowing the costs of the options to choose from. This knowledge can then be then shared with your financial planner and/or estate planning attorney. You don't want to

sell investments like a home without knowing the consequences financially as well as emotionally.

The care manager can be on "stand-by" for you (if life throws you a curve ball) and assist with those issues you don't have answers for. Also, if you need a guide to traverse the medical system or to handle a family member with a disease such as Alzheimer's, the care manager is there to partner with you.

You can find a professional certified care manager at www.eldercareanswers.com or www.caremanager.org.

As you plan for this new phase of life, you want to stay informed. There are two upcoming opportunities to gain some additional knowledge. One is a class I will be hosting, "Understanding Dementia," on Tuesday, Aug. 12 at 5:30 pm in my office. Call (925) 937-2018 to register (it is free).

Another free workshop is the Lafayette Community Foundation's 6th annual Senior Symposium, "Aging By Design," on Saturday, Aug. 16 at the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church (see related story below).

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