

Senior Advice: Wife's vision of retirement differs from husband's

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q: My husband and I have been happily married 37 years, and he plans to retire next year. He depends on me to prepare our meals and keep our home organized, clean and presentable for our friends and family. Sometimes I think my husband married me to continue the job of being his mother. I believe he visualizes a retirement life of more golfing days and fishing trips with his buddies while I continue my responsibilities.

However, I am looking forward to my retirement, too. After he retires, I want him to be my retirement partner. As we will be spending most of our time together, I want him to help me with my daily household chores. How can I give him a wake-up call to let him know I want him to share my work during our "Golden Years"?

A: Retirement does make a difference, and if your husband isn't in the habit of helping out, it's time for a conference. Make a list of your regular daily routine and check off chores you want to continue to do. It's then his turn to mark what he's willing to accept. That leaves the rest of the list negotiable.

Now it's time for him to make his list and go through the same process and compromise. Living together 24 hours requires a different lifestyle, and both of you understand that will happen. Anticipating your new life will make your transition easier. New issues will include budgeting, the decision of how many cars you need, how frequently you will eat out, how often you desire to see the family and have the grandchildren for visits, travel options that may include separate vacations because of different interests, and how to schedule some private time for yourselves.

Now is an excellent time to plan for new activities and learning opportunities you can enjoy together. Plans may include volunteering or attending adult education classes, along with both of your vocational interests that you now have time to do. Remember, partners who play together, stay together!

Q: My husband and I are stunned that our only child, an 18-year-old daughter, has eloped with her boyfriend. He is in his third year of college, and we like him, but believe their choice of timing is a big mistake. My husband and our daughter have not gotten along too well over the years, and I suspect this was a major reason for her choosing to elope. She was a smart high school student and is already pregnant and has quit school. We realize she will find it difficult to continue further education, which leaves her with few career skills. Both my husband and I are disappointed with her actions and have told her so. Are we doing the right thing?

A: Although you cannot undo what has been done, do you want to accept her decision and look forward to enjoying a loving relationship with her new family or do you want to spend the rest of your lives being unhappy and unforgiving? In most families the arrival of a grandchild is a precious event that families celebrate.

Trying to determine why she chose to marry earlier than you hoped is wasting time and energy. By criticizing her, some damage has already been done in terms of your relationships. If you do not elect to accept your son-in-law and grandchild in a loving manner, they will move on with their lives without you. It's your decision, but continuing to focus on your unhappiness and anger will not change the reality of the decision your daughter made. I vote for love and acceptance.

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