

PEAK 65[®] ON PURPOSE - WHY HAVING A PURPOSE SHOULD MATTER TO RETIREES AND FINANCIAL PROFESSIONALS

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As [Peak 65](#) Americans determine the financial aspects of their retirement readiness - *When should I retire? Do I have enough saved? Will my money last until I die?* - they are also simultaneously navigating the emotional aspects of retirement. Transitions from prior identities such as parent, professional, or child are inevitable and any one of these can have a profound impact on sense of self and financial decisions. By discovering the power of a new [Purpose](#) in later life, people have an opportunity to get clarity on what is most important to them as they age.¹ Purpose is fundamental to health, happiness, and longer lives as scientific studies show. But there is a business case for this as well-60% of clients in a recent survey cited an emotionally grounded reason for hiring their financial advisors.² Retirement planning conversations that incorporate powerful, open-ended questions like the classic, *"Why do you get up in the morning?"* are the first step towards creating this self-awareness. When people identify their gifts, passions, and what they value, it helps keep them connected and engaged in the world around them. Inviting people to reimagine themselves also can foster the potential to experience retirement with more emotional and financial confidence. This paper offers both the scientific case for finding a Purpose as well as practical ways to guide clients in this critical self-discovery.

A WORKING RETIREMENT

The first thing to acknowledge is that the traditional paradigm of retirement is shifting as it relates to age and the concept of stopping paid work. A recent Federal Reserve survey found that 45% of *employed* older adults consider themselves to be *retired*, often in what economists refer to as ["bridge jobs."](#)³ This helps shed light on a recent Pew Research study showing 19% of adults ages 65 and older are employed

today (11 million) compared to 11% in 1987, quadruple the size since the mid-1980s. And some 9% of adults ages 75 and older are employed today, about twice the share who were working in 1987 (4%). Workers ages 75 and older are the fastest-growing age group in the workforce, quadrupling in size since 1964.⁴ The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics also projects that 21% of adults ages 65 and older will be in the labor force in 2032, up from 19% in 2022, representing 8.6% of the labor force (those working and

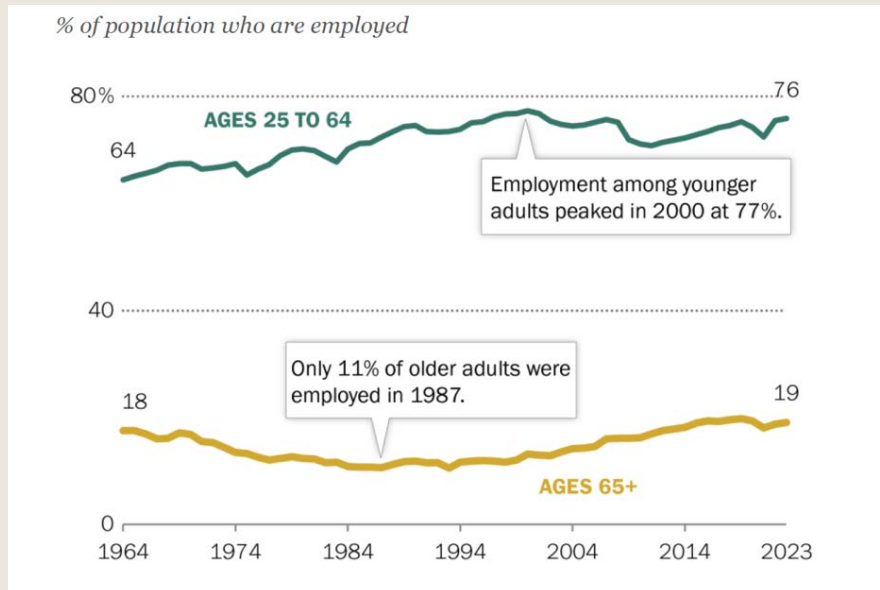
1. Leider, R. 2024 The Power of Purpose. <https://richardleider.com/books/the-power-of-purpose-3rd-edition>

2. <https://www.morningstar.com/financial-advisors/why-do-investors-hire-their-financial-advisor>

3. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerscommunities/shed.htm>

4. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/12/14/the-growth-of-the-older-workforce/>

Since the early 1990's, a rising share of older Americans are working



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS) "Older Workers Are Growing in Numbers and Earning Higher Wages"

looking for work) in 2032, up from 6.6% in 2022. Older adults are projected to account for 57% of labor force growth over this period. The only other age group projected to increase its labor force participation rate is 55- to 64-year-olds.⁵ All of this is to say, when a retirement planning conversation happens, make sure to leave room for the possibility people may still be, or want, to keep working.

PURPOSE IN PRACTICE

As coaches, we are trained to help people find or align with their Purpose and know it takes time and introspection to discover this new way of being. The Alliance for Lifetime Income's new workbook, "[Find Your Purpose. Fund Your Purpose](#)," makes starting this process easy. Based on decades of work on this topic by one of us ([Richard](#)), it begins with three questions: *What unique gifts do you have? What passions gratify you? What personal values will guide you in retirement?* This simple formula- Gifts + Passions + Values = Purpose (G + P + V

= P) - becomes the first building block before another series of questions that seek detail on people's retirement vision and then lists the steps involved to make sure it is properly funded. This last part is essential in helping people face a very real fear- almost 50% of adults between ages 61 and 65 are not confident that their savings will last their lifetime.⁶ Whether this fear is real or [imagined](#), a financial professional trained in retirement planning can address this financially. Those interested in helping their clients age *better* will also seek to connect planning within the context of Purpose.

This workbook seeks to solve another recurring problem- what you say is not always what they hear. A recent study found that 70% of financial professionals reported they frequently brought up with clients the topic of "*What you spend or will spend doing in retirement?*", but only 29% of clients said this happened frequently.⁷ By completing a written and visual exercise together, this communication gap has a much better chance of being bridged.

5. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/>

6. Alliance Lifetime Income, 2024 Protected Retirement Income and Planning Study, <https://www.protectedincome.org/prip/>

7. Ibid.

Gifts + Passions + Values = Purpose (G + P + V = P)

Understanding your purpose starts with recognizing your unique strengths, what you love to do, and what matters most to you.

Consider this example:



This combination may inspire purposeful activities such as:

- Teaching golf to youth in schools or community clinics
- Pairing experienced golfers with novices in a mentorship program
- Running workshops at community centers or senior facilities

THE SCIENCE OF PURPOSE

Finding a new Purpose later in life *and* working, by choice or need, are not mutually exclusive. In fact, research shows they can be mutually supportive. More and more scientific studies about Purpose show a range of positive outcomes for older adults, including extending longevity, better physical and mental well-being, and slower cognitive decline.

The famous [Blue Zones](#) research first brought this concept to the mainstream. What can the areas of the world with the healthiest and longest lifespans teach about living well? The research found that they share nine lifestyle habits, and you guessed it, Purpose is one of them. And knowing your sense of Purpose is worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy.⁸ More studies followed.

One found that older adults with a higher sense of Purpose were significantly less likely to die over the

five-year follow-up period compared to those with a lower sense of Purpose and this association remained significant even after controlling for factors such as age, gender, race, education, and health status.⁹ Another study of older adults showed a higher sense of Purpose in life may be able to reduce their cognitive decline by 50%; in fact, participants who scored in the 90th percentile are 2.4x less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease, as compared to those who scored in the 10th percentile. Even after controlling for the presence of brain pathologies, the protective effect of Purpose in life on cognitive decline remained significant.¹⁰ Yet another study of older adults aged 60 and above found a strong sense of Purpose in life was associated with lower levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms.¹¹

Neuroscience also shows how Purpose can influence brain structure and function. A recent study found evidence for a positive association between Gray Matter Volume (GMV) in the right insular cortex and [eudaimonic](#) well-being compared to people without a

8. <https://www.bluezones.com/about/history>

9. Kim ES, Shiba K, Boehm JK, Kubzansky LD. 2020. Sense of Purpose in Life and Five Health Behaviors in Older Adults <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7494628/>

10. Boyle PA, Buchman AS, Barnes LL, Bennett DA. 2010. Effect of a Purpose in Life on Risk of Incident Alzheimer Disease and Mild Cognitive Impairment in Community-Dwelling Older Persons. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20194831/>

11. Heisel MJ, Flett GL. 2014. Do Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life Protect Against Suicide Ideation Among Community-Residing Older Adults? https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-4939-0308-5_18

clearly defined Purpose.¹² Another study looked at the effects of an intergenerational [social health promotion program](#) on older men's and women's brain volumes. These findings showed that Purposeful activity halted and, in men, reversed declines in brain volume in regions vulnerable to dementia.¹³

This last study is particularly interesting as it relates to the earlier topic of an increasing number of older people in the workplace. An improvement in brain areas associated with dementia can have a huge impact on emotional and financial wellbeing. But an increasingly intergenerational workplace may have other potential positive outcomes, too. When younger workers, most often associated with innovative ideas, collaborate with older workers who bring a depth of experience and perspective (aka wisdom), employers have a chance to harness these two types of "intelligences" to deliver more creative, comprehensive problem-solving solutions.¹⁴ Nancy Meyers even used this as a plot in her 2015 movie, "[The Intern](#)." It's interesting to think about the role work will play as a cognitive intervention tool for an aging population.

CONCLUSION

The world's longest scientific study on happiness teaches us that close relationships and social connections are crucial for our well-being as we age.¹⁵ Purpose can be the pathway that helps keep us connected when careers, families, and friendships inevitably shift. Our hope is that people will embrace what Chip Conley, cofounder and CEO of the [Modern Elder Academy](#), calls a "Midlife Edit" to get clear on what matters, and what doesn't, to create room for a new Purpose in retirement.¹⁶ Financial professionals that incorporate these processes in their practice will be rewarded with potentially happier, healthier clients who live longer, more fulfilled lives, in alignment with their goals. Financial professionals may also benefit from meeting a network of people *connected* to their client's Purpose. Reminder- The U.S. is expected to see over \$84 trillion in wealth transfer through 2025 and it is highly like-

ly these wealth recipients are connected to this Purpose.¹⁷ Peak 65 marks the largest surge of retirement age Americans turning 65 in our nation's history. Over 4.1 million Americans will turn 65 each year through 2027 and, in a mere two years, the US will have more 65-year-olds than ever before. There are literally millions of people waiting to have this conversation.

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13. Carlson MC, et al. 2015. Impact of the Baltimore Experience Corps Trial on Cortical and Hippocampal Volumes. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5179033/>

14. Brown, RE. 2016. The Genesis of the Theory of Fluid and Crystallized Intelligence. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5156710/>

15. <https://www.lifespanresearch.org/>

16. Conley, C. 2024. Learning to Love Midlife. <https://chipconley.com/learning-to-love-midlife/>

17. <https://www.cerulli.com/press-releases/cerulli-anticipates-84-trillion-in-wealth-transfers-through-2045>