

# **Retirement from work: guidelines for its exploration in consulting and psychotherapy**

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## **Introduction**

Retirement from work in Spanish is called *retiro*, a word associated with *iubilare* (Latin) - to shout for joy (Etymologies of Chile, 2023). This connotation is presented in opposition to work, which in ancient times was associated with obligation and hardship. Today, however, retirement from work is considered a transition in life marked by losses: in income, in the role of worker, in status, in identity, in social relationships, affecting personal well-being (Hansen, 2013; Hurtado and Topa, 2019).

Retirement, if not brought forward by circumstantial factors, occurs in old age, in the context of aging, a phenomenon of the life cycle that Längle and Probst (2000) highlight as the final stage of life, from which it is possible to appreciate its holistic character, being a moment to “focus attention on the value of lived existence and the possibilities that still remain” (Längle and Probst, 2000, p.5). Coincidentally and from other perspectives, some authors highlight the value of resignifying life and the search for meaning in retirement (Cintrón, 2023; Hansen, 2013).

In this article we will focus on retirement as a sociocultural phenomenon and as a transition in the human life cycle. At the end, and collecting the elements addressed, we will propose guidelines for its exploration in consulting and psychotherapy from modern existential analysis (hereinafter, EA). Längle (2009) describes four conditions, which are the themes to work on in the EA in achieving a full existence and that are represented at the motivational level (1) physical survival, and the cognitive conquest of *Dasein* (being/being in the world), which refers to the motivation to be able to be; Its requirements are the possession of space, security and support and the active attitude to accept the positive and endure the negative (2) the pleasure and desire to live, the appreciation of the values of life - what is valuable for each person - whose requirements are having relationships, time and closeness and the active attitude of embracing life (3) Personal authenticity and equity that refers to allowing oneself to be as one is, whose requirements are consideration, justification and appreciation of others, but also one's own acceptance of oneself, going out to meet others and in this also delimiting oneself (4) The existential meaning and the development of what is valuable that

refers to the duty to act; It requires a scope of activity, a context that provides structure and direction to one's life, and value in the future. At an attitudinal level, it requires a change of position, an “existential turn”, openness to what life requires of me instead of just expecting it.

### **Retirement as a sociocultural phenomenon:**

The origins of retirement date back to ancient Rome, where the first pensions were established for soldiers with more than 25 years of service, in the time of Octavius Augustus, years 27 BC to 14 AD. They consisted of a plot of land and the monetary equivalent of 12 years' salary. Cities were also founded for retired military personnel or they settled in former military camps that were transformed into stable populations (BBVA Pension Institute, 2023). Land, a place to settle - space - and money to manage and create a new subsistence that would provide support and security for the rest of life. Common space, crucible of a collective identity and belonging.

Nowadays, this concern from the government structure is crystallized in public policies related to older people and in the guidelines of international organizations. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2020 the number of people in the world who were at least 60 years old surpassed boys and girls under 5 years of age and by 2030, one in six people will be 60 years old or older. further. It describes the older adult population as highly heterogeneous, with no typical older adult; The differences would be fundamentally due to factors in the physical and social environment. For this reason, the United Nations established the period 2021-2030 as the Decade of Healthy Aging, in which the WHO will focus on articulating the work of different organizations focused on reducing health inequalities and improving the quality of life of older people. and their social environment. The action plan contemplates work towards attitudinal and behavioral changes in relation to age and ageism or social discrimination against older people; the development of communities in which the capabilities of older people are promoted and the provision of health care focused on primary and long-term care (WHO, 2022).

The relationship with work is also an important issue in older adulthood. The International Labor Organization (ILO) spoke out in 2019 about the future of work, referring, regarding older adults, to the need to promote voluntary continuity in work, by extending the retirement age for those who wish to do so, working hours flexible and partial, teleworking and other supports through technology that can facilitate the extension of working life. In practice, in Latin America and the Caribbean, an

important motive for work in this population segment is the need to generate income, either because their pensions are insufficient or because they lack them (Montt and Contrucci, 2022).

### **Retirement as a transition in the human life cycle:**

The human life cycle is roughly divided into infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Throughout this cycle, the individual is faced with periods of transition. Miller (2016) defines transition as... “a short-term change characterized by an acute discontinuity with the past” (p.477). He proposes that, unlike change, which is situational, transition is psychological, it refers to a reorientation and redefinition of meanings necessary to incorporate the changes. He points out that when it comes to far-reaching transitions, such as retirement, they demand a review of one's values and lifestyle.

From the perspective of the life cycle, for some authors the closing of the retirement stage as a transition would mean the achievement of a kind of new balance, in which the person has acquired new routines and life has become predictable and satisfactory (Miller, 2016), or has achieved full implementation of their self-concept in tasks that do not involve a vocational search (Phillips, 2015). However, in the specialized literature there are conceptions of closure that entail transitions from part-time jobs (Amorim and França, 2019), which may mean closure with respect to the work period prior to retirement, but not the end of employment. vocational activities. Seen this way, retirement can also be a transition to new ways of life, until the definitive cessation of work activity.

At the same time, it is also important to highlight the possibilities in older adulthood for intellectual and artistic activity and creativity. López-Pérez (2021) mentions individuals who made important contributions in their older adulthood. Among these, Rousseau published until his death at age 82; Goethe, at the age of 63, published the second part of Faust; in architecture, Gaudí completed his conception of the Sagrada Familia cathedral at the age of 70 and Lloyd Wright finished the Guggenheim Museum at the age of 91; At age 80, Verdi composed Falstaff (operatic lyrical comedy) and at age 78, Franklin invented bifocal lenses.

### **As conclusion: Guidelines for consulting and psychotherapy**

Retirement as a individual experience demands a reorganization of existence, a new existential turn, in Längle's (2009) terms to unravel the demands with which life challenges us and a reworking of our experience, with ourselves and with the world. Different authors refer to the losses directly related to stopping working: in income, in identity, status, social relationships; possibly, in the sense that it justified getting out of bed on weekdays. From the AE, all of them are values that are lost and leave a void to fill. For this reason, the need to work on retirement is generated before retiring and during the process itself, favoring the creation of a base of economic, social and eventually labor support for the next stage of life. The heterogeneity recognized in older adulthood makes personalized accompaniment especially relevant and aimed at finding one's own values, capturing oneself and a new delimitation of one's own identity and one's own unique way of personal fulfillment.

The elaboration of the synthesis of one's own life - especially, but not exclusively in the field of work - will help in orientation in this new stage and may mean projecting the work done, its fruits and the skills developed in new spaces and circumstances that strengthen or model new nuances in one's own identity, or return to old dreams and projects left behind.

Above all, it will be important to recognize one's own prejudices and fears regarding older adulthood and old age, both for those who practice consulting and psychotherapy and for those who request their services, in order to encourage self-exploration and the search for one's own consent in the face of life with the necessary inner freedom. Finally, accept that life will continue to change after retirement, with its joys, sadness and fears, as well as oneself, on the inevitable journey towards death.

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