

# Am I Really Retired?

By Richard Holmes, April 2020

It just occurred to me that I might be retired. I had not thought of that before. Could I have just eased into it without noticing?

After transitioning from one activity to another over the years, retirement may have occurred during one of those transitions. Or did it? My mind is certainly not retired—it's just as curious and creative as ever. I think. And it's just as capable of blundering into mistakes or drawing wrong conclusions as it ever was. I'm sure.

So maybe my body is retired. That seems more likely. It hasn't totally quit working, but it's certainly yielding to reduced activities, even abandoning a few. All done unwillingly.

I think I've figured it out. The body doesn't retire all at once. It does it in stages. My feet retired just last week. They ache and don't want to participate in life's endeavors anymore. The feet have a lot of moving parts. There are 26 bones in each foot, and all 53 of them whine and complain after a long hike.

Flexibility retired several years ago, followed shortly by balance—which hinders walking a log across a stream.

My shoulder took early retirement with a torn rotator cuff eight years ago. And with no warning. It just said, "That's it". But it mysteriously decided to come out of retirement within a year after mending on its own.

Knee bones and hip bones still work just fine and have shown few signs of wanting to slack off. They have threatened to on occasions, but keep hanging in there. The head bone is another matter. It stubbornly clings to occasional absentmindedness.

Disjointed joints take turns vying for attention. A finger, wrist, elbow, shoulder, ankle—all rear up unpredictably for recognition, then subside after expressing their presence.

My eyes were headed toward semi retirement, but the cataract doctor extended their useful life by removing the cataracts. Now I can read street signs and see other cars while driving.

When I could no longer hike easily at high altitude I realized my lungs had objected and had gone into semi retirement. However, that came on slowly, giving me ample time to alter my mountain activities. Meaning high altitude hiking had receded into the past.

Two teeth did retire recently—permanently. They got stuck to a pair of pliers wielded by the tooth doctor, who's determined to replace them with implants. A tooth doctor is similar to the tooth fairy in that he takes a tooth away. But he doesn't leave money in its place. Instead, he takes it.

I need to conclude. As I'm writing this, my left foot is speaking to me. It recently acquired plantar fasciitis.