

## At what point is 'enough' enough?

I have enough. I hope you find you do, too, when you consider what's really important in your life.

I've pondered the question of how much is enough after receiving a perceptive e-mail from a reader and reviewing copies of two thought-provoking books.

The e-mail, from a reader in Wisconsin, embodies the philosophy guiding my own semi-retirement.

"Many of my 50-something friends are wasting some invaluable time that they've been given on Earth," the reader said. They are caught up in an "earning and spending cycle" (must keep working hard so they can keep buying things they don't really need), while worrying they'll need to save a lot of money to retire.

"I can't believe the number of smart, talented friends I have who are not particularly happy doing what they are doing," the reader said. But they believe "they must continue so they can stop working at (fill-in-the-blank age) to play golf or sit by the pool." I must agree. What a waste, doing something you don't like so eventually you can stop and do ... nothing?

Why not pursue your passions even if the pay is less? This reader did, returning to school for a degree in a different field. If you love what you do, you may never feel the



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need to totally retire, or at least won't mind working a few more years. Retirement, as the reader said, would be a time to work for joy and learn new things.

That's what I did in 2000 when I quit my full-time job at age 55, even if a half-dozen online calculators I checked estimated I was as much as \$250,000 short of what I needed to retire.

And yet, I've done just fine. By phasing down my writing rather than stopping completely, I've remained active, earning income doing something I enjoy but without the stresses of a 2½ newspaper job. I've found more time for family and friends, for hobbies and community. I'm taking music courses and volunteer as a chess teacher at two elementary schools, activities I enjoy but had no time to do before.

Other things my wife, Georgina, and I find gratifying, simple things such as daily walks on the beach, cost little or nothing. We are certain we have enough, not just to live on, but enough time to do the things we like and enough balance in our lives.

That's the point in the book *How Much is Enough? Making Financial Decisions that Create*

*Wealth*, by Arun Abey and Andrew Ford. The question "how much is enough?" is not simply about money but about "how much is enough to balance all areas of your life to achieve fulfillment," the authors say.

About the book, first published in Australia, "I was a bit skeptical, as I'm not a big fan of 'touchy-feely' planning," said Harold Evensky, a certified financial planner in Coral Gables, who sent me a copy. "Surprise! I thought it was terrific." Evensky liked it so much he wrote the foreword for the American edition.

Another worthwhile book is *The Secret Language of Money: How to Make Smarter Financial Decisions and Live a Richer Life*, by David Krueger, due out in August. Krueger, a clinical psychiatrist and business coach, advises that money "must be balanced with family, work, health, friendships, leisure, making a difference in your community and taking care of yourself."

Humberto Cruz is a columnist for Tribune Media Services. E-mail him at [yourmoney@tribune.com](mailto:yourmoney@tribune.com).

