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My name is Andrew Baron and this is “Well... It Depends!” the podcast where I address financial decisions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no.

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In this episode I asked the question should I retire at the same time as my spouse? But before we get into it, a short disclaimer, this is being recorded on August 30th, 2023. The contents of this podcast are strictly for informational purposes only and nothing said should be taken as investment, tax or legal advice.

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It is important to consult with a professional before making any financial decisions, as the strategies discussed may not be suitable for you specifically.

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Getting into it. Should I retire at the same time as my spouse? Well... It Depends!

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Before reviewing some of the general considerations, let's look at two particular situations that may present couples additional planning; having an age difference and having varied career trajectories.

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Having an age difference of five, 10 or perhaps even 15 or more years presents couples additional planning considerations, such as financial planning.

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Couples with a significant age difference may have access to their retirement benefits at different times. This may cause the need for a staggered retirement.

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Next, we have Social Security. Because Social Security benefits are age dependent, couples with a large gap in their ages may need to do additional planning considerations depending on their cash flow needs than couples that are closer in age.

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And finally, we have major life events such as graduations, weddings and births of grandchildren. These may play a role in one partner's decision to retire earlier than another.

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Our careers, like our lives, follow a certain rhythm. Let's break it down.

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Burnout. If one partner has an especially taxing job, whether it be physically or mentally, they might want to call it quits as soon as possible. On the flip side, you might have late bloomers, or people who are just hitting the peak in their careers when others are considering retiring.

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If they find their job especially fulfilling, it might not be very appealing to just walk away.

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And then we have pension benefits. Pensions can be a game changer in retirement, and it may make sense for one partner to stick it out to reach a certain threshold level on their pension.

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Pivoting back to some of the general considerations, what are some of the positives about retiring together? These include shared experiences. Entering this new stage of life together can help solidify your long-term bond.

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Coordinated finances. In some aspects it is easier if you're both on the same page, transitioning from your working years into fixed income in retirement.

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Shared social calendar. Retirement presents the opportunity to do more as a couple together without the distraction from work. Now what about some of the cons of retiring together?

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Financial pressure. Two people transitioning to a fixed income at the same time might be a bit scary for some couples.

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Different visions of retirement. Do you and your spouse have the same vision of retirement, or does one of you want to travel the world while the other would prefer staying at home? It is crucial to get your visions aligned.

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And finally, we have adjustment. Doubling the retirement transition also doubles the emotional adjustment.

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What about a staggered retirement approach? A staggered retirement allows financial breathing room as one partner's income continues, allowing the other to dip their toes into the retirement waters. This ease into a new lifestyle can be a gentler transition for both parties.

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A staggered retirement also allows the opportunity for individual pursuits. One partner can explore their passions, setting the stage for the other down the line.

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To recap. For couples with an age difference, consider financial timing, Social Security and life milestones.

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For couples with differences in career trajectory, consider potential burnout, late career peaks and pension benefits. The pros of retiring at the same time include shared experiences, financial coordination and a unified social calendar.

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The cons of retiring together include potential financial strain, differing visions and doubling of the emotional adjustment pain.

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Stagger retirement allows for financial cushion, an ease into a new lifestyle and the opportunity for personal pursuits.

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So to answer the question, should I retire at the same time as my spouse? Well... It Depends!