PREPARING FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER

A retirement reflection handout for first responders

Retirement is more than leaving a job. It can mean adjusting to a different identity, rhythm, community, and sense of purpose. There is no single "right" way to experience this transition. Use these questions to notice what feels strong, what may need attention, and what you want to build before your last shift.

Name (optional): _____ Target retirement date: _____

1. EMOTIONAL PREPARATION

Identity • meaning • adjustment

☐ What parts of my first-responder identity am I proud to carry forward?

_____

☐ Who am I outside the role, rank, uniform, or daily mission?

_____

☐ What feelings come up when I picture retirement (e.g., relief, grief, excitement, uncertainty)?

_____

☐ How will I recognize when I need support rather than trying to handle it alone?

_____

2. RELATIONAL PREPARATION

Partner • family • close relationships

☐ How might my increased time at home change routines, roles, or expectations?

_____

☐ Have I talked openly with the people closest to me about hopes, concerns, and boundaries?

_____

☐ What relationships need attention, repair, or more intentional time?

_____

☐ How will we balance time together with individual space and interests?

_____

3. PHYSICAL PREPARATION

Health • energy • daily structure

☐ What habits help me feel strong, rested, and well—and which need attention?

_____

☐ What will give my days structure, movement, and a reason to get out of the house?

_____

☐ Have I planned for preventive care and health needs as my routine changes?

_____

☐ What physical activities do I want to maintain, begin, or return to?

_____

4. SOCIAL PREPARATION

Belonging • friendship • community

☐ Which connections from the job do I want to maintain, and what will that look like?

_____

☐ Where can I build friendships and community outside the profession?

_____

☐ What activities, groups, volunteering, or interests could help me feel connected?

_____

☐ Who can I reach out to when I miss the camaraderie or shared mission of the job?

_____

MY NEXT-CHAPTER PLAN

My strongest area	Which area feels most prepared, and what is helping? _____
Area to strengthen	What is one area I want to give more attention before retirement? _____
One next step	What is one realistic action I can take in the next 30 days, and who can support me? _____

A reminder: You do not have to figure everything out before your last shift. Preparation is an ongoing process. If the transition brings persistent distress, isolation, conflict, or difficulty adjusting, consider reaching out to a trusted peer, a mental health professional familiar with first responders, or another source of support.

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