

Seminar focuses on retirement

By Bill LaVeist
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SUN CITY WEST — While retirement tends to liberate husbands, it might do just the opposite for their wives, a gerontology expert says.

Gail Eisen of the University of Michigan spoke to retirees at a seminar Monday on adjusting to retirement.

Held at Beth Emeth Synagogue, 13702 W. Meeker Blvd., the seminar focused on stress caused by retirement, rediscovering meaning in life after work, adjusting to life at home, and retired singles.

Eisen, a consultant to companies and universities on retirement and older work force issues, said that couples usually don't know what to expect from retirement. She said those who attend pre-retirement courses usually learn about financial planning but are unprepared for the psychological changes that result.

In her doctoral dissertation, Eisen studied 56 couples and found that both husbands and wives said

retirement had a more positive than negative effect on their marriages. However, she said that husbands tended to feel freer, more flexible and spontaneous in activities, while wives experienced less control of time, activities and more disruptions in the home.

The reality of two people living full time in the home can cause more stress for the wife because her routine is disrupted, Eisen said. For instance, wives may have more to clean up caused by their husbands, but they don't get the extra help.

Eisen said she found that the "wives just didn't insist as much" that their husbands help out and clean up after themselves.

Men can get stressed if they are shocked by the abrupt loss in workload, she said.

"We still live with this notion that to be idle is to be lazy," Eisen said. "The message that we send as a society is that quiet, contemplative moments are not respected in our society."

She said that other cultures, such as Mexican or Navajo, take

leisure seriously and consider it as doing something.

Eisen said retirement can be traumatic for some because it represents a shift from middle age to old age. People think of themselves as being young, but the bodies they see in the mirror look the opposite, she said.

Max Kelter of Sun City, speaking from the audience, said the key to enjoying retirement is getting involved in activities. He said he was looking forward to retiring and didn't have any trouble adjusting to being home full time with his wife. He said he's lived in Sun City 30 years and he's having a ball playing chess, oil painting and swimming, to name a few activities.

Ronald McCollor, a retired dentist, said he didn't have any trouble with not working or making the transition to home life. His wife, Anita, assisted him at his practice so they were used to seeing each other all the time.

They said pre-retirement courses helped them prepare for their leisure years.