

MORO

YOUR RESULT: THE SIDELINED PROFESSIONAL

Help Your Parent Find What Comes After Work

A resource guide for adult children whose
parent misses being the one people counted on.

What you're seeing

Your parent still reads the industry news. Old coworkers come up in the first five minutes of a call, along with a story about a problem they solved. They tell you retirement is great, and they mean it. But you can hear what they miss: being the person people counted on.

That's the Sidelined Professional. For decades, work handed your parent four things at once: competence, relevance, colleagues, and being counted on. Retirement can remove all four overnight, leaving a capable person with far fewer places to use their skills.

Why another hobby may not help

Golf and travel fill a calendar. They don't always fill the gap. If what's missing is challenge, contribution, recognition, or being counted on, a hobby can leave it wide open. Start by looking out for three things.

1. Do they bring up their old work more than you'd expect, and with energy?
2. When someone asks for their advice, do they light up?
3. Do they say they're enjoying retirement but sound restless when they describe a regular week?

Signs they may be missing their role

One or two is normal. Most of them, for months, is worth a conversation.

- Old projects, colleagues, and wins come up often.
- They seem bored or restless even with a full calendar.
- They look for ways to be counted on, like jumping in to help or offering their opinion.
- They say retirement is great, but the details stay vague.

What the research says. In a U.S. study of 240 retired adults, people who viewed their previous work as more meaningful reported greater meaning in life after retirement ([Liu & Allan, 2023](#)). The findings suggest that what work meant to someone can continue to shape how they experience life after work. This is an association, not proof that meaningful work causes greater meaning in retirement.

How to start the conversation

“What do you want to do now?” is a hard question when the real loss is who they were at work. Ask about the work first. The answer points toward what needs rebuilding, not just what needs to fill the calendar.

Instead of this	Try this
“What do you want to do now?”	“What part of work do you miss most?”
“You’ve earned some rest.”	“When did people count on you most at work?”
“Why don’t you pick up a hobby?”	“What problems do you still catch yourself thinking about?”
“You don’t still have to think about that.”	“Tell me about a project you were proud of.”
“Are you bored?”	“Who do you miss working with?”

A simple three-step flow

1. Pick a low-pressure moment. A drive, a walk, or cooking together works. A holiday dinner or the end of a hard phone call doesn’t.
2. Ask what they miss, then let the story run. Listen for the verb inside it: solving, mentoring, leading, learning, or being around sharp people.
3. Reflect it back once: “It sounds like you miss being the one people called.” Don’t offer fixes yet. Being heard comes first.

If they say “I don’t miss it”

“That’s fair. I’m curious what you were best at, whether or not you miss it.”

Then let it go. If the question stays with them, they’ll bring it back. That’s the conversation working.

Where your role ends

You can't give your parent a title, a team, or a job, and inventing tasks to make them feel counted on tends to read as charity. Skip the made-up favors. Your part is to notice, ask, listen, and point toward places where their experience is wanted, like mentoring, boards, volunteering, or part-time work. Their part is to decide.

Do ask for their advice when you really want it. A real question about your career, a decision at work, or a problem you're stuck on tells them their judgment still matters, and it's true.

If you see lasting low mood, pulling away from people, or a loss of interest in things they used to enjoy, encourage them to talk with their doctor. Coaching supports a good life after work. It doesn't replace medical or mental health care.

If you live far away

Distance hides how much they miss. You get a phone call and a parent who says "fine." Three adjustments help.

- Ask for their take on something real. "I'm facing a decision at work. How would you handle it?" works over the phone and says what they hope to hear.
- Give a heads-up before the bigger talk: "I'd like to talk about something on Sunday. Nothing's wrong. I'm curious what you miss about work."
- Use visits to bring their expertise into the room. Ask them to show you something they know, or take them somewhere related to their field. Watch whether they light up.

Want a thinking partner for this conversation? Moro offers virtual coaching, so your parent can work with a coach wherever either of you lives. [Book a discovery call](#)

What I miss, and where it could go

For your parent to fill in, or for the two of you to talk through. There are no right answers.

Part of work	How much I miss it	Where I could get it now
Solving problems	A lot / Some / Little	
Mentoring or teaching	A lot / Some / Little	
Leading people	A lot / Some / Little	
Learning new things	A lot / Some / Little	
Being around sharp people	A lot / Some / Little	

One small step to try this month:

Keep it moving

One conversation is a start. Moro's retirement lifestyle coaching helps people identify what they lost when they left work, what still matters, and how to use those parts of themselves now. Your parent can [book a discovery call](#) directly, or you can reach out first at hello@trymoro.com.

Book a discovery call

Not sure this fits your parent, or want a sibling to take it too? [Take the quiz](#)

Source

Liu TY, Allan BA. Previous work and meaning in life post-retirement: a reminiscence perspective. *Aging & Mental Health*, 2023;27(1):1-7. doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2022.2036945

Moro provides retirement lifestyle coaching. It is not financial, legal, medical, or mental health advice.