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# No Place for Should: Keep the “S” Word Out of Your Next Season Thinking

**R**etirement transitions are hard enough for couples without the “helpful” advice generously doled out by family, former colleagues, neighbors, and friends. Such advice usually includes the “s” word: *should*.

Those intending to be helpful seem to have an abundance of “shoulds”: “You should go on a corporate board.” “You should spend more time with your children and grandchildren.” “You should spend more time together, of course.” “You should spend plenty of time apart.” “You should find a hobby.” “You should focus on your health.” “You should downsize from that big house.” “You should spend more time with your parents . . . who knows how much longer they will be around . . .” “With your experience, you really should . . .”

Seems like everyone has a “should” to offer you, and all that serves to do is add another “s” word to your life: stress.

There is no place for “shoulds” when it comes to defining how to spend your next season as a couple. The “should” ball will be thrown at you, but don’t catch it. Let it fall to the floor. You don’t own what you don’t catch.

Every couple’s transition will unfold differently based on so many factors. These include personal needs and desires, life goals, constraints (personal, financial, health, geographic), gifts and interests, career experiences, connections/networks,

etc. You don’t need to accept someone else’s view or advice about what you “should” or “should not” do. You are the best expert on you. The most important thing is to communicate with each other.

Pause and reflect on what you feel called to do both individually and as a couple. You both have worked hard and earned the right to think through and choose what you want to do, what feels right to you, what brings you joy, where you want to make a difference in your post-corporate life. And as important as anything is the recognition that you are really deciding together only on your *first* next season . . . not your *forever* next season.

**Each phase of your life is defined, governed, and enabled by so many factors, and they are changing all the time: your physical and mental health, the health of your spouse/partner and children, the presence/care of aging parents, etc. Our eyes do not allow us to see around corners, which is why we think about our future in seasons. One thing we know for certain: seasons change and with that, our lives change.**

Don’t allow yourself to be artificially constrained by someone else’s “should” regarding what your post-corporate career

looks like. Rather, keep your aperture open wide for as long as you can, contemplating and examining the unlimited possibilities. You have earned the right not only to take your time evaluating options, but also to fully capitalize on the tremendous experiences and learnings you have had in your career.

Most importantly: become deaf to the word “should.” The only thing defining success in your next season is that you find purpose and feel joy, peace, and enthusiasm about how you choose to spend your time.

It is your life and only your life. There are no “shoulds” in that.

**About the author:** After over two decades of helping senior executives on the “productivity” side of the equation, Dr. Leslie W. Braksick and her colleagues created **My Next Season** (mynextseason.com), a company whose purpose is to help executives transition from careers oriented around *productivity* to lives anchored in *purpose*.

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