

Design Your Dream Retirement

Workshop Handout

This document serves as review and reference material for people who participated in the “Design Your Dream Retirement” workshop. It is not intended to substitute for actual participation in the workshop.

The purpose of the workshop is to help you envision, plan for, and ultimately enjoy the best retirement possible. I want to share inspiration, information, discussion topics, research, and resources to enable you to envision and plan for a happy retirement.

To read much more information about the topics I touch upon in the workshop, please visit my website, RetireFabulously.com.

Introduction

What do you think of when you hear the word “retirement”?



Perhaps you envision it as a carefree time filled with the freedom to travel and do the activities you enjoy most. Maybe you’re thinking that it will be like a permanent vacation.



Perhaps you expect that it will be boring. You’ll have time on your hands and nothing to do. You’ll probably sit on the couch in front of the TV for hours or do other passive things such as surfing the internet.



Or, you may think of retirement as a time of declining health, characterized by walkers, wheelchairs, doctor visits, retirement communities and nursing homes.

And to be fair, your later retirement years may include some of these things. It’s been said that your retirement will probably consist of your “go-go years,” your “slow-go years” and your “no-go years.”



Some people have resigned themselves to believing that they will never retire at all. They expect to work until they die.

If you are among the minority who are truly doing work they are passionate about and your work brings you a great deal of fulfillment, you may indeed work for most or all of your life. If this is a choice you gladly make, that's fine.

But most people who think they will never retire feel that way because they don't think they will be able to afford to retire.



Or maybe you don't know. Maybe you have no idea what to expect. Maybe you haven't even thought about it until now. A lot of people avoid thinking about it because they don't like to think about growing old.

Your actual retirement will probably resemble what you visualize that it will be. Your actual retirement will probably reflect what you plan for – or fail to plan for.

Retirement does not need to be the end of life or the wind-down. It is the beginning of an exciting new stage – one that you have the freedom to design however you want!

Envisioning Your Life after You Retire



The word "Retirement" carries baggage for some people. In the section above, if you envisioned retirement as a time of purposeless boredom or decline, it may be helpful to think of the post-career phase of your life in terms of another R-word – "Renaissance!"



Your Renaissance is a time of rediscovery and reinvention; a time to (re-)discover your true passions and create the life you really want.



Sometimes, after people retire, they become PIPs – Previously Important People. If someone they meet asks them what they do, they reply, “I’m a retired ____.” That’s what they used to be.

After you retire, you are free to create a new identity. When someone asks what you do, you can say “I’m a musician” or “I’m an artist” or whatever suits you best. You may have several hats that you wear.



As you think about your Retirement – or Renaissance – it’s a good time to ask yourself,

“Who am I ... really?”

“Who will I be after I retire?”

“How do I want to make a difference in the world?”

Sometimes people make their greatest contribution to the world, and create their greatest legacy, during their retirement years, because that’s when they are doing what they are truly passionate about. They are doing what they are really meant to do.

Four Fundamentals for Attaining Personal Fulfillment During Retirement

Finding who you are and being this person

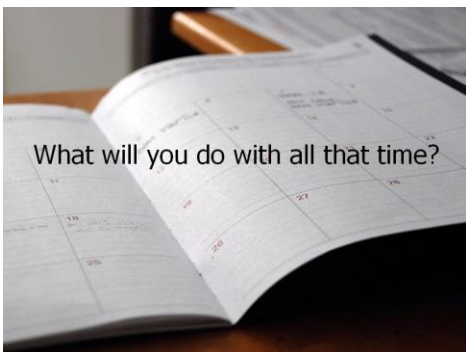
Recreating your life through personal interests and creative pursuits

Making optimum use of your leisure time

Maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual well-being

Ernie Zelinski, in his book [*How to Retire Happy, Wild and Free*](#), offers four fundamentals for attaining personal fulfillment during retirement:

1. Finding who you truly are and being this person,
2. Recreating your life through personal interests and creative pursuits, possibly through a new, part-time career,
3. Making optimum use of your leisure time, and
4. Maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.



So, what are you going to do with all that leisure time you’ll have after you stop working? How can you use that time to fulfill the fundamentals above? What are you truly passionate about?

Here’s a useful exercise. Get a stack of post-it notes or a few blank sheets of paper and a pen, and write down everything that comes to mind in response to each of these questions:

1. What do you like to do today?

These are all the things you do, either regularly or occasionally, that you enjoy.

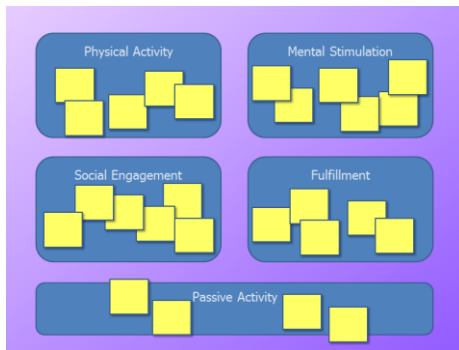
2. What have you enjoyed in the past?

These are the things that you used to do, but no longer have time for.

3. What would you like to do someday?

These are the things you have always wanted to try, but have never had the time nor made the opportunity to pursue.

Try to come up with at least twenty-five, total. You may benefit from completing this exercise in several sittings. After your first pass, put your lists aside and come back to it in a few days. You will probably think of some more things in the interim.

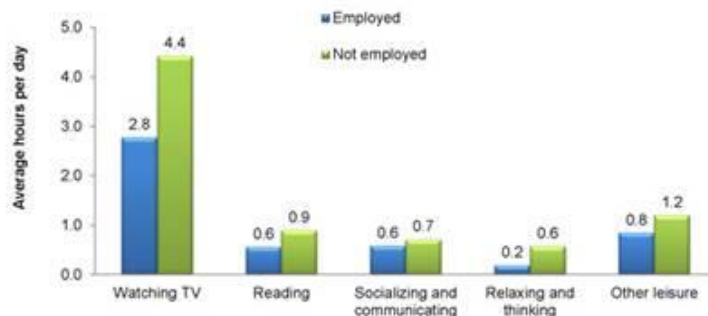


Now, group all of the things that you have come up with into these five categories:

- Physical activity
- Mental stimulation
- Social engagement
- Fulfillment (things that make you truly happy)
- Passive activity

Hopefully, you will have a nice balance among the top four groups. If you discover that you are lacking in activities in any of these, think about some things you might be interested in.

Leisure time of individuals age 65 and over: employed vs. not employed



NOTE: Data include all days of the week and are annual averages for 2013. Other leisure includes travel related to leisure.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey

We all spend some time doing passive activities such as watching TV and surfing the internet. As long as you keep this in moderation, it's fine. But if you find that your activities are weighted heavily in this category, you might find yourself bored, unhealthy, and unhappy after you retire.

Without a thoughtful plan for what you'll do with your time, most of what you have been doing with your non-working time will simply expand to fit the new level of available time. You will probably find that the amount of time you spend watching TV or surfing the internet will disproportionately increase.

For a more complete exercise, visit RetireFabulously.com and download the free [Retirement Visualization Guide](#). If you are married or partnered, have your partner do the exercise independently of you. Then, you can compare and merge your lists. This should spark some interesting and valuable conversations!



If you have invested a large amount of your time and energy in your job over the course of your working career, you may be hard-pressed to come up with many items for this exercise. Just as telling, if you have relied upon your work to provide you with most of your sense of recognition, accomplishment, and worth, you may be in for a tough time after you retire. In these cases, you may need to spend a lot more time thinking about what will bring you reward and satisfaction after you retire.

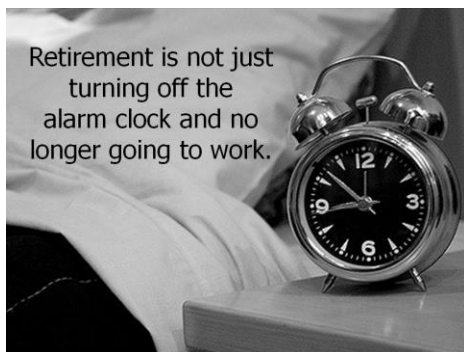
Similarly, parents who devote themselves entirely to their children's needs may find that they have lost themselves somewhere along the way. Retirement can be very similar to "empty nest syndrome," and it provides a great opportunity to rediscover yourself and examine what you need to do to feel fulfilled.

Retirement will probably require you to devote more effort to socialization. In our jobs, we are surrounded by people all the time. For most of us, even if we don't know these people particularly well, there is comfort and energy in being around people all day long.

If many of your friends are your co-workers, you may be dismayed to find out that most of these friendships will fade away quickly. You may have a small number of co-workers who are significantly engaged with your life outside of work, but most of them aren't – they are just people you have hallway conversations or go to lunch with. Even if you try to continue to meet them for lunch, you'll find that you won't be as interested in what's going on at work, and they won't want to hear too much about all the fun things you are doing with all of your leisure time (that they don't have). For this reason, having activities that provide you with opportunities for socialization are an extremely important part of planning your retirement transition.

This topic is explored in greater depth in the book [*Design Your Dream Retirement: How to Envision, Plan For, and Enjoy the Best Retirement Possible*](#).

Transitioning Into Retirement



You might think that transitioning into retirement is easy – you simply stop going into work.

But the fact is that many parts of your life will change at once, such as:

- Your daily schedule
- The people in your daily life (or lack thereof)
- Your physical surroundings
- Your relationship with your spouse
- Your relationship with money



If you move when you retire, you will experience additional change.

Change can be stressful – even when the changes are positive. Your retirement will probably be the timeframe in which more things change at once than at any other point in your life.

Simply being aware of the changes that will take place and anticipating them will go a long way towards making this transition less stressful.



During the weeks and months following your retirement, you may, at times, experience unsettling emotions such as:

- Loss of career identity / lack of purpose
- Uncertainty about whether you made the right choice
- Guilt over no longer working
- Disappointment
- Disorientation
- Fear and worry
- Loneliness

If your employer forced you into retirement, you may also feel resentment.



As much as you and your spouse love each other, suddenly being together 24 hours a day, 7 days a week may be a big adjustment.

Each of you will probably have different assumptions about what your retired life will look like, such as:

- How much time you'll spend together or apart, and the mix of combined or separate activities and friends
- How you'll spend money (since you will probably be living on less)
- Where you'll live
- Division of household chores
- How much you'll travel, and where

If one of you will continue to work while the other retires that will present issues as well, especially with regard to division of household chores.

To achieve your ideal retirement,
what are you willing to change?



It's one thing to envision what activities will be part of your ideal retirement lifestyle. It's another to actually make them happen.

Most of us are creatures of habit. You have lived with your routine for many years. Many of the new endeavors you wish to undertake will require you to do things differently.

You might have to become more diligent about managing your time than you were when work dictated much of your schedule.

To achieve your ideal retirement,



what are you willing to let go of?

Designing your ideal retirement is as much about what you remove from your life as what you add to it.

Since you have much more control of what is and isn't part of your life, you can choose to eliminate:

- Activities you don't enjoy
- Obligations that don't bring fulfillment
- Possessions you no longer use
- People you don't enjoy

What would make your life simpler, easier, and more fun?

All of these changes, stressors, and emotions are discussed in greater depth in the book [*Smooth Sailing into Retirement: How to Navigate the Transition from Work to Leisure*](#).

Where to Live After You Retire

Where would you like to retire?



Why would you move after you retire?

Photo credit: Scott Kistner

There are many reasons why people want to move when they retire. Here are just a few:

- Cheaper cost of living
- Different climate
- Closer proximity to loved ones
- A new adventure



It's tempting to retire to a place where you have enjoyed spending time on vacations – especially places like tropical islands and beaches, such as Hawaii.

However, most of these destinations don't work out so well as places to live permanently. Realistically, you're not going to spend every day on the beach. There may not be much else to do. Review the exercise above, in which you listed all the things you want to be able to do with your time. How many of them will be available to you on your tropical island?



Many people who move to places like Hawaii when they retire move back in about six months, and spend a lot of money in the process.

The same can be said for mountain cabins. They are great places to go to relax and get closer to nature. But as a permanent residence, remote mountain locations offer very few cultural amenities, activities, and opportunities for socialization. You will probably have to travel farther to access health care, as well.



A much better option for many people is a college or university town. Many retirees enjoy taking courses to learn new things and keep them mentally active. Colleges and universities usually have music, theatre and art departments which offer performances that are free or very low cost – and chances are they will be appreciative of having more people in the audience!

A university's medical and/or dental school could be a good opportunity to receive quality care, as well.



On my website, retirefabulously.com, I polled readers to determine which factors were truly important when deciding where to move after retirement. These factors emerged as the most important:

1. Climate/weather
2. Safety
3. Quality of, and proximity to, health care
4. Cost of living
5. Cultural amenities
6. Low taxes
7. Recreational amenities
8. Proximity to major airport
9. Political/social climate
10. Avoid discrimination
11. Presence of diverse people
12. Good senior services
13. Proximity to loved ones
14. Good public transportation
15. Quality of local assisted living/nursing homes
16. Nearby college or university
17. Concentration of other seniors

The order in which you rank the considerations above will probably vary, but it's good to evaluate your priorities before you start packing and put your house on the market.



So, if you're tempted to move someplace that you've enjoyed on vacations, apply the criteria above and revisit your list of activities from the sticky-note exercise as you evaluate whether or not this will make a great place to retire.

If you are thinking about retiring to another country, be sure to investigate that country's immigration laws. They vary widely. Several Latin American countries, such as Panama and Ecuador, are very welcoming of American retirees. Other desirable destinations, such as Australia and New Zealand, have strict laws which limit options to people who are coming to work.

If you are tempted to move to a foreign country to enjoy their lower cost of living, be sure you also estimate how much you'll spend travelling back to the U.S. for visits.

Many people are attracted to the possibility of migratory retirement – that is, maintaining two residences and moving back and forth as the seasons change. This is a very appealing option, but consider that it will be more expensive to maintain two residences, as well as the cost of traveling between the two.

If you plan to move to someplace new, it's a great idea to rent there for a year (or at least six months) before you pull up stakes where you live now.

The topic of moving after you retire will be covered extensively in my upcoming book *The Quest for Retirement Utopia: How to Find the Retirement Spot That's Just Right for You*.

Resources



I invite you to visit and follow my website, RetireFabulously.com. I offer more in-depth commentary on many of the topics covered in this workshop, and many others. There's also a Retire Fabulously page on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/RetireFabulously).

These retirement lifestyle planning resources are available on RetireFabulously.com:



The Ultimate Retirement Resource Guide

In the 5+ years that I have been researching and writing articles for *Retire Fabulously!*, I have discovered a lot of great sources of information, many of which I return to frequently.

I have collected all of the best resources I have found in one convenient place in order to share them with you.

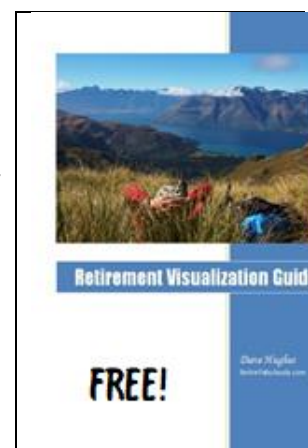
Yours free when you [subscribe to receive updates](#).

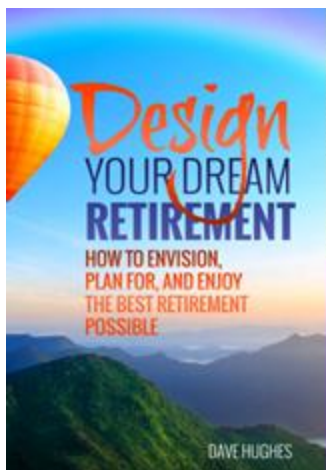
The Retirement Visualization Guide

This guide will help you envision what your retirement might look like. It will help you brainstorm possibilities and clarify your values and priorities on issues such as how much money you will need to support the lifestyle you wish to have, the best places for you to move (if you are thinking of moving), and how you'll spend your leisure time.

For couples, this guide will help you align with each other on your desires and goals.

[Download it for free on RetireFabulously.com](#).





Design Your Dream Retirement **How to Envision, Plan For, and Enjoy the Best Retirement Possible**

This book will show you how to visualize your retirement in an optimistic, possibility-filled light, and provide you with the knowledge and tools to help you create a plan for achieving your retirement dreams.

You will be inspired to rediscover and reinvent the real you – the you that has probably been buried by years of adapting to the demands of your career.

You will learn how to fill your life with a balance of activities and pursuits to keep you happy, healthy, and fulfilled.

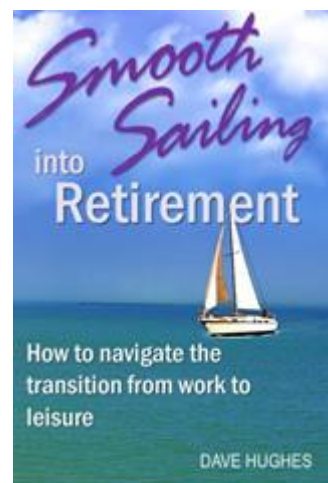
Available in paperback or Kindle from [Amazon](#).

Smooth Sailing into Retirement **How to Navigate the Transition from Work to Leisure**

This book will guide you from your last few months of work through your first year of retirement. It identifies the many ways your life will change and prepares you for the emotions you may experience along the way.

This book will show you how to design your new day-to-day life in a way that will reflect your passions and interests. You will be inspired to create a new identity for yourself that embodies the way you plan to live in retirement and frees you from the limitations of your former job title.

Available in paperback or Kindle from [Amazon](#).



The Quest for Retirement Utopia **How to Find the Retirement Spot That's Just Right for You**

This book will examine all of the factors you should consider when searching for the place where you can best enjoy your retirement. It will help you identify which criteria are most important for you and which places will best meet your needs – whether in the United States and abroad.

The book will be packed with information resources and include personal stories from people who have found their retirement utopia.

Available later in 2019. (This is not the final cover image.)

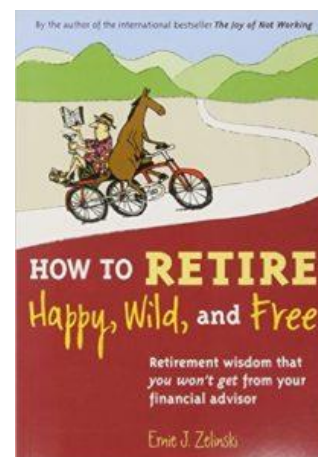
Other Excellent Retirement Lifestyle Books

[How to Retire Happy, Wild, and Free](#)

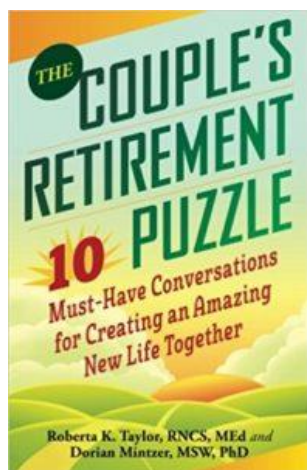
by Ernie Zelinski

Ernie Zelinski is arguably the leader in retirement lifestyle books and philosophy. Ernie has great advice on topics such as how to find your true purpose, make the best use of your leisure time, pitfalls to avoid, traveling, learning, and overall life happiness.

The book is subtitled “Retirement wisdom that you won’t get from your financial advisor.” Some of his case studies and reader stories leave me wondering how the people he profiles financially support themselves doing some of the things they do. But that aside, the book is full of wisdom, good humor, and refreshing new ways to look at retirement and leisure time.



[Available in paperback, Kindle, and audio.](#)



[The Couple's Retirement Puzzle](#)

by Roberta K. Taylor and Dorian Mintzer

This is the best book I have found that covers the issues couples should be talking about as they examine their values, identify and compare their dreams for the future, and plan their retirement. This easy-to-read book is loaded with stories and case studies, and it's full of practical advice.

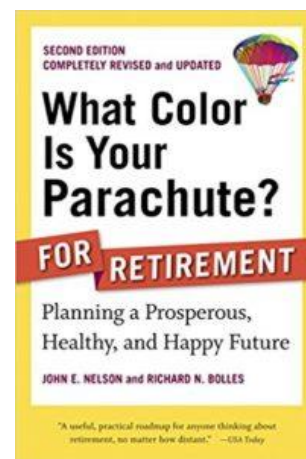
[Available in paperback.](#)

[What Color is Your Parachute? for Retirement](#)

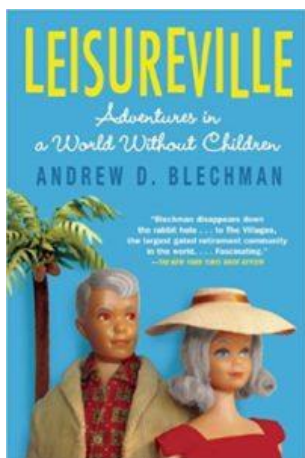
by John E. Nelson and Richard N. Bolles

From the authors who brought you *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, the world's best-selling career book, this book offers both a holistic, big-picture look at these years as well as practical tools and exercises to help you build a life full of security, vitality, and community.

More than a guide on where to live, how to stay active, or which investments to choose, *What Color Is Your Parachute? for Retirement* helps you develop a detailed picture of your ideal retirement, so that—whether you're planning retirement or are there already—you can take a comprehensive approach to make the most of these vital years.



[Available in paperback and Kindle.](#)



Leisureville: Adventures in a World Without Children

by Andrew D. Blechman

This book offers a no-holds-barred expose on what life is really like in the largest 55+ adults-only retirement communities. Blechman spent several months living in The Villages, Florida's enormous planned retirement community, and also visited Arizona's Sun City and a few others.

The writing reflects the author's bias (he doesn't favor the concept of age-segregated communities), but the book is factual and thoroughly researched. It's essential reading if you are thinking of moving to a 55+ adults-only retirement community.

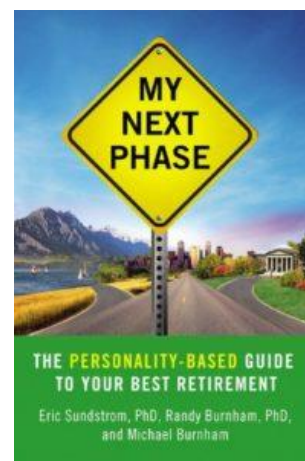
[Available in paperback, hardcover, and Kindle.](#) Note that the hardcover version is titled *Leisureville: Adventures in America's Retirement Utopias*, but it's the same book.

My Next Phase: The Personality-based Guide to Your Best Retirement

by Randy Sundstrom, Randy Burnham and Michael Burnham

The key to a successful retirement lies in your personality, not in your bank account. This book offers a revolutionary, step-by-step process to figure out your personal "Retirement Style" and creates a unique retirement plan based on who you are. This book leads you to reflect upon your own personality (and that of a significant other if you have one) and helps you to be more successful in retirement.

[Available in hardcover and Kindle.](#)



Note: The links above are affiliate links. I will receive a small commission on the purchase of these books, which will help defray the cost of maintaining my website. This does not increase the price to you. Thank you for your support!

About the Presenter

Dave Hughes is a leading authority on retirement lifestyle planning. He writes about retirement lifestyle planning on his website, RetireFabulously.com. Dave's goal is to help you envision, plan for, and enjoy the best retirement possible.

Following a successful 34-year career as a software engineer, trainer and course developer, and manager, Dave accepted an early retirement package and retired at age 56.

During the final phase of his working career Dave started searching the internet for information about what life in retirement is really like. He discovered that at least 95% of all the retirement-related information was focused on the financial aspects of retirement – how much money you'll need, how you should shift your investment mix as you get older, how fast you can draw down your savings, and so on. Relatively little was being written about how to live a happy, fulfilling life during retirement, and of that, practically nothing was being written from an LGBT perspective.

Dave created RetireFabulously.com to fill that void. Dave has extensively researched retirement lifestyle issues, as well as drawing upon his own experiences of transitioning into retirement and those of others.

In 2016-2017, Dave was a regular contributor to U.S. News' *On Retirement* blog. In 2017, RetireFabulously.com received the Best Senior Living Award from SeniorHomes.com as one of the top retirement blogs, by both reader polling and judge's selection. Dave was named one of NextAvenue.com's Top 50 Influencers in Aging for 2017.

Dave is an accomplished public speaker and workshop leader. He was active in Toastmasters International for over eight years, and has earned Distinguished Toastmaster, that organization's highest honor.

In addition to writing articles for RetireFabulously.com and books about retirement lifestyle planning, Dave is a wedding officiant and a jazz trombonist. Dave lives in the suburbs of Phoenix, Arizona with his husband Jeff and their dog Maynard.

Dave is available for interviews, speaking engagements, workshops, panel discussions, and writing guest articles. You may contact Dave at dave@retirefabulously.com.

Please visit these websites to learn more:

RetireFabulously.com

TheDaveHughes.com

