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Many people are stuck in jobs they don't like. They mainly do those jobs to pay their bills. Some never escape the whirlpool of misery and live their whole life in that swirl. Others are able to get out unscathed. How do those who successfully make the transition do it?

First of all, if you're unhappy or unfulfilled at work, you must take action and make a change at some point to find happiness or fulfillment or you'll have a long and miserable work career (and don't worry about causing heartburn for your employer--they'll find someone to replace you and the world will continue to turn).

Deciding when to leave a job can be even more difficult than starting a new one. Is there anything in your current job that would keep you there? Before you throw in the towel, let me ask you the following questions:

- Do you feel valued at work?
- Are you adding any value to your organization or work center?
- Is your organization or work center adding any value to you?
- Is your work interesting?
- Is it challenging?
- Does it offer enough variety?
- Does it offer enough autonomy?
- Do you have good relationships with

Leaving a job

colleagues?

Do you look forward to going to work each day?

Does the job pay you enough to meet your financial obligations?

If you answered “no” more than “yes,” it's time to go. (If the only issue is that the job isn't paying enough, you need to be forthright with your boss and ask for a raise. Be prepared to justify your request in three sentences or less. You never know, you might get one just for asking!)

It can be time-consuming to look for a new job while you are busy holding down your current one. While opportunities will typically present themselves, it is a good idea to introduce a degree of structure into your job search. It will involve time and energy on your part during nights or weekends, plus some potential covert behavior or actions at work.

You can maximize your choices by submitting clusters of job applications at the same time so that potential offers crystallize around the same time. This allows for timely comparisons and decreases the likelihood of you getting a better offer from someone else after you just accepted an offer and are in the second week of orientation.

Perhaps you can go back to school or learn a new skill-set or trade, giving

yourself a new opportunity that didn't exist before. This, of course, takes much planning and saving.

If you're stuck in a work contract, you'll have to be patient and complete the terms you agreed to unless you can find a loophole. A good lawyer can assist you in these instances.

Regardless which strategy you pursue, be careful to not let emotions get the better of you. Make career moves using your head as well as your heart. As gratifying as it would be to throw everything up in the air and yell “I quit,” you know you probably shouldn't do that until you are really ready. Also, it's always best to leave without ruffling many feathers--you never know when/if you cross paths with colleagues again.

So make a list of all your options, criteria, and priorities, think them through, and then step back. Allow yourself time to see how you feel. You must feel good about your decision--confident that you have based it on the best available information and with full knowledge of the consequences.

Once you make a decision, have no regrets. Take action when the time is right and don't look back!

~ The End ~