



Quit In Your Head

Strategies to Keep You Going When Your Job Is Getting You Down

By Janice Knight

Feeling Stuck In Your Job?

I often work with clients who are frustrated with their jobs and feel stuck because they feel they don't have the time, energy or resources to do anything about it. It's easy for me to be empathetic because I remember these feelings well. Many times in my past, as a single mother of three and the sole provider for my children, I too, felt stuck in my job. Some bosses were abusive, some work environments were toxic and some jobs were just repetitive and boring, not withstanding assurances otherwise during the job interview. The reasons were many, and the results were always the same....a sense of hopelessness and despair. I was smart enough to know that I couldn't keep quitting jobs every six months and expect to keep finding new ones.....and yet, I usually knew within six months that I was not suited for the job I had accepted.

What to do? I came to realize that I needed to seriously assess my talents, strengths and abilities and make adjustments on my job selection process or be doomed to a never ending series of unfulfilling and energy draining jobs in the future.

Necessity is the Mother of Invention

I found a solution that helped me stop the cycle of unending struggle. I was working for an abusive boss, one who took pleasure in yelling at staff and belittling them in front of each other. Emotionally, I longed to quit, just walk off the job, and yet I knew that this would not be a good choice for me in the long term. I needed some release and decided to just "quit in my head". I felt instant relief. Nothing had changed in reality, but my world shifted for me. Quitting in my head allowed me to disengage emotionally from my job. I didn't understand at the time why this

was so powerful, but have since learned that once our limbic brain (where emotions are processed) is engaged, we no longer have access to our neo-cortex (where logic and problem solving take place). When we experience negative emotions, a fight or flight reaction is triggered which causes the reticular activating switch (RAS) in the brain to close down until the threat is removed. Until we relieve ourselves of the threat, there is no access to the part of the brain that would allow us to rationally solve the problem. So, instead, we continue to feel hopelessness and despair and feel stuck. Wow! I was on to something, without even knowing why.

A Head Case

As a life coach, my job is not to solve my clients' problems or issues. However, I have been able to pass along my technique of "quitting in your head" and have found it to be quite useful to my clients. Without exception, we all make better choices when we have access to our neo-cortex (the thinking part of our brain). Here are the steps to take to maximize your own "head case" towards a more fulfilling job experience:

1. **Decide if it's time to "quit in your head" and then do it.** If you find you are frustrated at work and don't want to take it any longer, just imagine that you have quit your job (even though you are still there). "Head, I hereby quit this job." Say this only to yourself. Your goal is to disengage and give yourself a "time out" so you can think through a plan of action.
2. **Begin to view your job as an observer.** Step back and really look at what is happening. How do you contribute to your job? What role do you play in any negative interactions at work? What can you learn from this situation? What can you learn from the people who cause you grief at work? What skills do you need to develop? Give up being a victim, ever.
3. **Use your job as a learning opportunity to grow and gain skills for your next job.** If you have a boss who is difficult to get along with, research and then practice various techniques for working with difficult people. Use every negative encounter as an opportunity to grow your coping and influence skills. Get creative- explore techniques which will help you better understand yourself and others: NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), emotional intelligence, enneagram. Just google these and you'll find a wealth of information.
4. **Take the time to discover who you are and what you want.** When you "quit in your head", you are essentially taking a time out to figure out what's next for you. Give yourself the time you need. Don't rush yourself into your next job without really figuring out what will satisfy you. What are your strengths and talents? What do you value in life? What would a fulfilling career really look and feel like. Imagine it. Work with a career counselor or coach to fully explore YOU.

5. **Relax and enjoy the process.** It's just plain fun to explore what you truly desire and then go for it. There is absolutely nothing you cannot do if you give yourself the time, space and energy to unfold.

Colleagues will be asking you why you smile so much at work. Only you will know that you “quit in your head”.

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