



# A Season of Happiness

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HL16

## I Hate My Job!

### Has it changed, or have I?

We used to tell our children that there are four kinds of jobs: the average nine-to-five that is a pain at times, but keeps your head above water; the big-money earner you really detest which you can stick at just long enough to set yourself up for the future; there's the one you love so much that you don't care it pays only peanuts; finally there's the greatest job on earth incorporating the best bits of the other three. Because we can't all be rocket scientists or Hollywood icons, most of us opt for the first. We'll have a modest home in suburbia with 2.4 children, a couple of pets and a long-term loan to support, so the practicalities of life underline stability as the prime consideration. On leaving school, the starting occupation may be anything from a trainee-ship to waiting table, quite often selected on a whim because nothing else popped up as interesting; and, of course, the wage packet that comes with it is a juicy carrot few youngsters can resist. Not too many will stay in these positions for their entire working lives, moving on to better things as they become available. By then, they will be deeper in debt than they have ever been and, although growing increasingly tired of the daily grind, they accept they are probably stuck with it right up to the day of retirement, if it ever arrives. From this point, the rot eats away at satisfaction until they are forced to admit: "I hate my job!"

Reasons for this confession are all around - the work environment and the mood of the place; a boss who is always finding fault; certain work associates who are impossible to get along with; not to mention the pay which is nowhere near as much as the next-door neighbour earns for doing the very same job, but for a different employer. In many respects, little has altered since the early days when it was a pleasure to front up for work, even on a Monday. Everything was new then: stimulating and refreshing. The boss had a right to complain when things went wrong - after all, he was paying the wages. As for extra work over and above that in the job-description, it was accepted as part of the deal; and, of course, willingness to co-operate furthered popularity with nearly everyone and was a source of personal satisfaction. Then something comes along to change that opinion: long-term relationships, a family, buying a house, or maybe just the passing of years simply makes former happy employees older and wiser. Suddenly, fairness and demarcation become important issues, constant reminders that they are doing more than they are being paid for; plus, their own job is starting to suffer - and doesn't the boss know it! This is when every single, petty niggle is swooped on to justify an attitude which, if left to its own devices, will not only see them in the unemployment line, but will impact on their personal lives and especially their health.

Feeling good is about more than just the right diet and sufficient appropriate exercise. When the mind is in turmoil, life can become unbearable; and the main reason for this can be hard to pinpoint if there are too many elements to consider. Then, unfortunately, the one that features as the likely cause tends to cop the blame. The job, after all, does take up a third of life. Whatever we might prefer to be doing for those eight or more hours a day, we have to put it on hold causing resentment. But it never used to. If we didn't think that way in the beginning and the job hasn't changed much since then, why is it suddenly private enemy number one? Is it possible that something else has slipped into the equation, perhaps a troublesome development on the home front? Having to be at work would certainly prevent us from resolving it. Quitting the job would provide the time to handle it properly; but that would mean no money coming in. Finally, our disturbed, angry and frustrated mind flits past the financial ramifications and simplifies the problem to work versus home. That must be the crux of the matter, seeing as we spend a good portion of every night arguing about the job or money. With this, the seed of dissension has

germinated and it is soon to grow very fast because, whether intentional or not, we'll tend and water it. The sour attitude planted at home is prickly and hangs on. By the time we arrive at the office, the chafing discomfort of it tempers thoughts and actions which aren't necessarily appropriate or even rational. Albeit unwittingly, we have subconsciously begun building a case for resignation, making sure that the evidence in favour of it is irrefutable.

Surely, no-one in their right mind would commit such financial suicide without realising they were doing it? It sounds crazy when, in actual fact, it is quite the opposite. That part of the mind which handles these matters is definitely on the ball. Call it intuition or subliminal reasoning - it's the control-centre that takes over when we aren't able to think straight on a conscious level. It can see our problem and a way to resolve it, even if we can't, or we refuse to. Before writing this possibility off as airy-fairy nonsense, it might be an idea to look closer at this balancing-act we call life. We are trying to cope with a very complex existence which is easier to manage when the various aspects are divided into separate boxes. As we move from one to another, part of the previous comes with us to the next. This may be just an essence, a feeling or mood instigated by whatever was in the box we just left. That affects how we respond to the current situation which may, in turn, also add to the baggage we continue to transport as we go through our day. It is small wonder, then, that an unresolved conflict at home will make us less satisfied with being at work; and, of course, vice versa. Trouble is, we are in so much of a fluff that we can't see the obvious. Maybe we just don't want to, but if we are to bring happiness back into our life, something needs fixing.

Maybe the job *is* the prime candidate, particularly if overall circumstances have changed. As years go by, people grow older, slower, less able to handle the heavier physical load that was a breeze when they were younger and fitter. Those in more sedentary occupations are just as vulnerable to fatigue, a worse kind in a way because the aches and pains can't be cured with liniment or a back-brace. Then there's the cost of living - always on the rise. When the requirements of the job are causing health concerns, or the salary is no longer sufficient to pay the bills, switching to something more compatible and profitable is simply a matter of self-preservation. But quite often this isn't the case. By comparing the current detestable tasks and exhausting work-load with the pleasant and far easier ones of the past, it may have to be admitted that the job is pretty much the same as it always was. If it isn't necessarily the work that's different, what else is there?

Nearly everyone takes work home with them, not always in the form of a laptop or a briefcase full of papers. Frequently, it is simply a verbal report of memorable events prompted by a casual: "How was your day, dear?" The tone of the response will be tell-tale, and if the returning worker is in a bad mood, the one asking the question could find themselves the surrogate recipient of angst and complaints that should have been dealt with at work. Unfortunately, there is no bin outside the factory gate where bad vibes can be dropped off, but to dump them on the family is unfair and rarely the answer. Still, talking over problems with a partner may succeed in putting them in perspective. Being too closely involved makes objectivity difficult, whereas someone further removed tends to be more rational, certainly less emotional; but we should avoid subjecting them to an aggressive barrage as if they are to blame. Treating people we care for as whipping-posts will do little to relieve work-related stress, but will definitely add to it by straining essential personal relationships. Their encouragement and advice can be invaluable, as long as it is listened to. We should also remember that they too have a life and we are a part of it. So, if they are telling us something we don't really want to hear, we ought to think again; because they are only trying to hold the relationship together, the same one we seem determined to sabotage.

Also worth consideration are those cases where the home-wrecker really *is* the job. Often, the one doing it can't see beyond the basics it provides, or the damage it is inflicting on life in general. Police officers, fly-in-fly-out workers and others who keep long, irregular hours are classic examples. They are dedicated to their occupation and will continue to defend it passionately, sometimes obstinately, to the bitter end. When that day eventually arrives, as it probably will, they are likely to turn around only to discover the things they used to value have gone - friends, partners, families. Then the job had better be all they'll ever need, because they won't have

much else left to derive comfort from!

Anyone coming to this conclusion, and wishing to do something about it, might feel inclined, there and then, to rush in and tell the boss where to get off; but it would be wise to look at the other side of the coin first and learn from it. If we seriously think about that - family, relationships, socialising and doing our own thing - it is rarely trouble-free, and a few problems do crop up from time to time. When they occur, most of us might feel like packing a bag and walking away, but we rarely do. Instead, we try to resolve them amicably in ways that allow us to repair, then preserve the status quo which we can continue to enjoy. Often this means compromise and trade-offs, accepting that we can't have everything our own way and have to make concessions. We do that because we value what we have and don't want to lose it. Presumably our job isn't as important, not if we are seriously contemplating chucking it in; at least, this may be how we regard it based on current attitude. The actual truth, unfortunately, can be hard to swallow. Despite the job seeming to make every day spent doing it thoroughly miserable, and we have a tendency to carry the aggravation home after work, without the financial security it provides, life beyond the workplace would be a lot less bearable. Business and pleasure may be unlikely partners, but we can't have one without the other. Maybe it's time to reassess priorities in this marriage of convenience.

So, what am I saying - quit the job you now hate? It may come to that; but remember the financial consequences and the fact that you will eventually have to find employment of some kind. That's never easy when you are already out of work. Think seriously about resigning, certainly, but go on the hunt for another job before handing in your notice. Prospective employers will always look more favourably on an applicant who has a job and is seeking to better themselves. Deciding to take this route will mean putting up with the hassles for a while longer, although this may not be quite as bad as it sounds. Once the choice to quit has been made, even though it won't be implemented immediately, you'll be happier in yourself, far less stressed and everyone will benefit. You could even discover that the job isn't as hateful as you made it out to be, this simply because your attitude towards it will inevitably change. By thinking about it, talking about it and checking out alternatives, all in a calm, rational way could prevent the knee-jerk reaction that might end in tragedy. And who knows, you may decide to stick with a job that is, in the main, pretty okay after all - as jobs go, that is.

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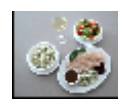
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