

# Weirded at work

How to know if those 9-to-5 blues belong to your job or your psyche by SIBYLLE PREUSCHAT

WE KNOW YOUR JOB PAYS BUT what does it really cost? Large numbers of people report that they're unhappy with the way they earn a living. Having daily experience with so unpleasant a scenario is not conducive to mental or physical health. It doesn't help that in this culture work is practically synonymous with identity.

When we feel that our daily tasks

are out of sync with our emotional complexion, our passions or our values, the result can be depression, irritability, numbness and an inability even off the job to find joy. Sometimes it may seem like the only escape route is illness, addiction or "goofing up" badly enough to get fired.

If this describes how you feel, don't try devising your own strategy -

you need a wise adviser: a therapist, trained career coach or spiritual teacher, because the key question is, Is it your job that needs changing or your psychological approach to it? Until you begin a process aimed at answering this, there will be no resolution. And if you're unhappy but not totally over the edge yet, working on this question may well prevent your descent.

## what the experts say

"If people just do something for the month, they will never truly be deeply fulfilled. To tap into what you're on this earth to do, be with yourself in silence, sitting in nature or practicing contemplation. You don't figure this out; you feel this out. You listen to your heart first to separate the 'what' from the 'how.' If you worry too much about how (you will accomplish change), you will never get really clear about what (you want to change). Practicing gratitude is huge. If we focus on what we do have, on feeling grateful and joyful, then we become magnetic to more good and abundance. If you're in a job that doesn't work, find other things to be grateful for and you will attract more positive experiences"

**CAROL LE NEVEU,**  
*career and life change coach, Toronto*

"Believing you can have a job in line with your values takes self-esteem. To get self-esteem, always tell the truth. I help my clients locate their passion. You can do your passion and not have to get paid for it, and still be fulfilled. Know how much time the paid job actually costs. (When you add up the time needed), often something that looks to pay

\$35 an hour ends up paying \$12. If there's actually a job down the street that allows me to do my passion, maybe I should just work for \$12."

**AMANDA MILLS,** *financial therapist, founder, Loose Change, Toronto*

"Working in a situation in which you are going against your own belief system is very damaging. You should be looking for a better fit, a place where your spirit can be nurtured. If you can't get out right away, you can ask, 'How can I bring meaning (to my job)?' and 'How can I interact with someone in a positive way?' Then you bring the whole of you and your values into the workplace. You don't have to change the company or the policy; you're not likely to do that. I think this is a healthy thing to do regardless of your work environment."

**G. ROSS LAWFORD,** *PhD, personal coach & author, Toronto*

"Generally I find (people's unhappiness) is not about the work. The circumstances don't need to change; it's their attitude. You can't run away from yourself; you'll go to a new job and create the same situation. You don't want to throw your

investment away. You want to use that as a springboard for where you're going. A big issue is office politics. Those who don't want to play end up at the bottom. People have to learn how to play the game of power. You (also) need to make every effort to change things upsetting you. Often you need guidance, support, mentoring. Too many people are trying to do it alone and don't have the wherewithal."

**DAVID CORNFIELD,** *career counsellor, psychotherapist, Toronto*

"If (people are in disliked jobs) solely for the income, the feeling of hopelessness is a stressor, because they don't feel they have control over their destiny. (Such work) can be a habit pattern. The question becomes whether they'd be happy in any job. If there's been a lot of emotional trauma and blockage in earlier life, it can have a paralyzing effect on overcoming problems. People may feel unworthy of getting what they want. The issues can be dealt with by helping patients set reasonable goals and organizing themselves (to meet them)."

**BORYS CHAMBUL,** *chiropractor, acupuncturist, kinesiologist, Thornhill*