

Should I Stay
or Should I Go?



*How to Get the Most Out
of Your Job during a
Tough Economy*

How to Get the Most Out of Your Job

By Dorothy Tannahill Moran

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In Search of Job Satisfaction

There's no quick fix to finding fulfilling work—you know, the kind of work that gets you out of bed in the morning *before* the alarm clock rings. Some people give up on the pursuit of job satisfaction altogether, buying into the belief that work is a means to end, a necessary evil, something you have to do to pay the bills.

Others believe that job satisfaction is linked to finding a new job. They believe their lack of fulfillment is rooted in the job itself, or in the organization they are working for. They stay at one job until the honeymoon is over, and then they move on to another.

But moving on is becoming increasingly difficult. Our economy is in a major slump, and new jobs are hard to come by. Not to mention that moving from job to job is an exhausting endeavor in itself . . . especially when you never really find what you're looking for. It's like Sisyphus arduously rolling a boulder to the top of a mountain, only to have it fall back on its own weight. People who have hopped from job to job hoping to find fulfillment and purpose know these efforts are very rarely rewarded.

Forget the economy, forget everything you've been told about job satisfaction, and focus on these two facts:

- You don't have to accept the slump you are in.
- It's possible for you to find satisfaction . . . *in the job you have right now.*

There are no quick fixes. You'll have to take responsibility for your own situation, and you'll have to make a serious commitment to your job and career growth. But your efforts will be rewarded.

My goal in writing this workbook is to help you determine what you need and want from your job, so that you may make the positive changes necessary to achieve fulfillment and satisfaction in your current position. It can be done.

To your success,

Dorothy Tannahill Moran



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What Is Job Satisfaction?

Job Satisfaction /n/: a sense of happiness and fulfillment felt by people who enjoy their work, and do it well.

In my work as a coach, I have identified ten areas that contribute to my clients' satisfaction at work. While all of these areas will play a part in job satisfaction to some degree or another, how they are prioritized will vary from individual to individual. The ten areas are:

1. **Financial Reward.** Those who approach their work as a means to an end place more emphasis on their paycheck than they do on their interest in the work itself. People who fall into this category are motivated by money, and find fulfillment when they are paid for their performance. Those who fall into this group easily move on when a higher-paying job comes their way.
2. **Stability.** Those who see their work primarily as a way to provide for themselves or their family often put emphasis on stability, rather than on advancement or career growth. In tough economic times, particularly when layoffs are rampant and new jobs are hard to come by, those who usually put stability toward the end of their priority list may find themselves moving it higher up the list.
3. **Advancement and Recognition.** Those who are motivated by advancement and recognition approach their work with their career in mind. They are more willing to put up with doing things they don't enjoy in the short term, as long as it allows them to climb the ladder in the long term. People in this group are motivated and fulfilled by power, prestige, and status. Opportunity to move onward and upward—and to see their progress—make them happy.
4. **Impact.** Those who are motivated by the impact they have—on the world, on other people, on the field they are working in, or even on the organization itself—are focused on making a difference. They get their satisfaction from contributing, and from understanding how that contribution matters in the big picture.
5. **Process.** Those who are motivated by the work itself view their job as a “calling” or as their *raison d'être*. When all is said and done they love the actual work itself, and that is their focus. An artist, for example, may find fulfillment in the act of creating, and that may take precedence over fame, fortune of making a difference (which is not to suggest that other artists won't find satisfaction in those things!)



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What Is Job Satisfaction [continued]?

6. **Structure.** Some people really love being part of a team, while others prefer autonomy. Some people love highly defined jobs with clear instructions, while others like forging their own way. For people who place structure high on their list of things that contribute to job satisfaction, the way a company organizes and operates is key to their happiness.
7. **Expression.** Those who are motivated by expressing their identity, values, and creativity place high value on working in an atmosphere that allows the work they do to reflect who they are and what they can do. People who place emphasis on expression find the most happiness in an organization that values and seeks out new ideas.
8. **Environment.** Workers who are motivated by their environment place high value on enjoying the physical and social aspects of work. They want the physical environment in which they work to be comfortable and supportive, and also want to be able to enjoy their co-workers as friends. People who fall into this group are likely to be dissatisfied by an environment in which their physical or social needs aren't met.
9. **Relationships.** Those who are motivated by the relationships they forge—both inside the organization and out—are focused on interacting with others in a meaningful way. They get their satisfaction from working closely with others.
10. **Balance.** Those who rank balance as high on their priority list want to work in an environment in which both professional and personal commitments are appreciated and respected. They are happiest when their personal life doesn't suffer as a result of their work life, and vice versa.

“The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: decide what you want.”

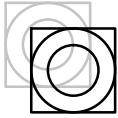
~ Ben Stein, Economist and Actor



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Reflect

Rank the ten areas that contribute to your personal job satisfaction below, from 1 to 10 (with 1 being the most significant.)

Financial Reward	___	Stability	___
Advancement/Recognition	___	Impact	___
Process	___	Structure	___
Expression	___	Environment	___
Relationships	___	Balance	___

How are your top three needs being met either fully or somewhat at your current job? Give specific examples.

What needs are not being met at your current job? Give specific examples.

What are the major gaps you notice between what you need to be satisfied at work, and what are you getting?



Act

Pick one gap area to focus on. List three actions you could take this week to bridge the gap between what you are getting and what you want/need.

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.



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Recognizing Burnout

When you aren't satisfied with your job you may quit emotionally—long before you ever officially leave your job. Because burnout can creep up slowly—it's all too easy to make the leap from a few bad days to complete burnout—it's important to recognize it before it becomes permanent.

Circle True or False to the following questions.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| I'm no longer goal-oriented at work. | T/F |
| My relationships with my coworkers no longer matter. | T/F |
| I'm no longer making new contributions | T/F |
| The quality of my work has declined | T/F |
| My supervisor and I no longer communicate. | T/F |
| I'm exhausted, even though I'm not working that hard. | T/F |
| I dread interacting with my supervisor. | T/F |
| There's nothing I look forward to at work. | T/F |

If you have circled "T" two or more times, you may already be beginning to burn out. What to do? Keep reading!

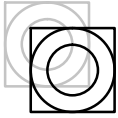
"There is no greatness without a passion to be great, whether it's the aspiration of an athlete or an artist, a scientist, a parent, or a businessperson."
~ Tony Robbins, Author and Coach



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Reflect

John S. Heywood, a professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee who has studied job satisfaction extensively, notes that while workers in the U.S. tend to search for job satisfaction, workers in other countries focus on creating job satisfaction in their current positions. How have you attempted to attain job satisfaction in the past? Do you search for it? Create it? Both?



Act

List three actions you could take this week to create job satisfaction for yourself in the job you are currently in.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

***“Did I ever tell you about a nasty habit that flight attendants pick up on the job? We learn to always keep smiling, even when we’re out of Bloody Mary mix.”
~Eric Wald, “View From the Top,” Movie - 2003***



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Ten Ways to Get More from Your Current Job

Try these ten strategies to improve your situation in your current job now.

1. **Get in Touch with your Passions.** Your passions never really go away. While they may be a little rusty, the things that feed your soul and stir your heart are still within you.
2. **Engage.** The cure for exhaustion is not rest. It's involvement. When you are truly absorbed in something, you feel energized. The connections you feel from participation create the drive you need to perform your absolute best.
3. **Manage your Supervisor.** Be one step ahead. Always have a good strategy in place to address resistance from your supervisor. Build a mutually beneficial relationship.
4. **Challenge Yourself.** Don't wait for your employer to engage your interests, skills, and education. What skills and experience do you need for your dream job, and how could you improve them? Take a class, ask someone to mentor you, or educate yourself through books, CDs, podcasts, and seminars.
5. **Tweak Your Job to Your Natural Preferences.** Understand how your natural preferences match up with the structure of your job. Identifying what's working for you, as well as what isn't working for you, will allow you to move toward making changes in your job's structure that better suit you.
6. **Clarify Job Requirements.** One of the keys to feeling good about your job is knowing what is expected of you. Request clear expectations, advocate for needed education and training, and ask for frequent reviews.
7. **Connect with People.** When you think about it, much of the reason why we do our jobs is to serve other people. Understanding how you impact the lives of people around you—both inside and outside the workplace—can increase your satisfaction.
8. **Invest in Improvement.** By allocating a specific amount of time toward education and self-improvement, you can significantly increase your specific job skills, as well as knowledge about the industry in which you work. As you gain the education and knowledge necessary to excel in your job, your fulfillment and enjoyment will increase.
9. **Make Time for Life Beyond Work.** Paying attention to both your work life and your home life is integral to increasing job satisfaction. If you find that you're working more and playing less, chances are you'll also notice your enthusiasm and motivation—and eventually your performance—decrease.
10. **Choose Your Mood.** Reframing a difficult situation—finding the silver lining in something negative—can completely change your outlook and increase your satisfaction at work.



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Think of two times this week when you felt dissatisfied at work.

When _____

When _____

Which of the 10 strategies could you use to help improve your situation? How would you use them, and what kind of difference do you think it would make? _____



Finish the following sentences:

Get in Touch with Your Passions

One thing I would like to start doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____

Engage

One thing I would like to start doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____

Manage Your Supervisor

One thing I would like to start doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____



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Challenge Yourself

One thing I would like to start doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____

Tweak Your Job to Your Natural Preferences

One thing I would like to start doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____

Clarify Job Requirements

One thing I would like to start doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____

Connect with People

One thing I would like to start is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____

Invest in Improvement

One thing I would like to start is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____

Make Time for Life Beyond Work

One thing I would like to start doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____

Choose Your Mood

One thing I would like to start doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to continue doing is: _____

One thing I'd like to stop doing is: _____



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Is It Time to Leave?

There's a difference between temporary and permanent job dissatisfaction. When do you know it's time to remove yourself from your current situation? There are eight circumstances that warrant a good, hard look at whether you would be better off exploring new options.

1. **When you were never a good fit for the job, and never will be.** Your job should fit your natural preferences in more ways than it doesn't. If not, it could be time to move on.
2. **When your boss has written you off.** If your boss is not willing to communicate with you in meaningful way, won't consider your ideas for restructuring your job, and doesn't really seem to care if you succeed or fail, it's definitely time to look elsewhere.
3. **When you've written your boss off.** If you and your boss just don't gel—if you have vast differences when it comes to values, ethics, incentives, or to work in general—you might not be able to find happiness at work as long as you're working together.
4. **If you don't have the desire to learn or improve your skills.** If progressing at your job requires additional education or skills, and you find that you really have no interest in pursuing these things, you likely don't have the fundamental interest in your work you'll need to feel satisfied.
5. **If you can't find anything about your job that you like doing.** If you think hard but can't find one thing about your job that you actually enjoy doing, it's time to change things up.
6. **If your job is negatively affecting your health or personal relationships.** If the amount of stress and unhappiness at work is so significant that it's affecting your health or relationships, it's time to start looking elsewhere.
7. **If there's no incentive to perform.** If there's no incentive for you to get out of bed and perform your job everyday—if there's no benefit that resonates in a way that's meaningful and motivational—it's time to find another job.
8. **If the atmosphere is toxic.** If the level of infighting, gossiping, back-stabbing, and negativity is so multi-layered that you don't know where it begins or how you would even begin to fix it—time to search for better environs.



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Circle True or False to the following questions:

- For the most part, I believe that my job matches my personality. T/F
- My boss and I have a respectful, open relationship with good communication. T/F
- My boss and I share similar work-related values, ethics, and philosophies. T/F
- I am open to looking at ways to improve my skills and increase my knowledge. T/F
- I can name several things about my job that I truly enjoy doing. T/F
- My health and relationships are positively impacted by my job. T/F
- I feel like I gain something from my job. T/F
- I feel like I contribute in a meaningful way. T/F
- I enjoy the atmosphere at work. T/F

What do your responses tell you about whether you can find satisfaction in the job you're in?



Focus on the questions to which you answered *False*. Use the space below to write about what it would take from you to make those *True*.



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Six Steps to a Smooth Transition

When all is said and done, changing jobs is a reality of professional life. As a matter of fact, according to a recent study done by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average baby boomer has held about 11 jobs between ages 18 and 42.

If you've decided that your present job is unsalvageable and it's time to move on, it's important to develop a strategy to ensure that your new situation is better than your old. By following six steps, you can boost the odds of landing a position that meets your needs.

1. **Size up your situation.** Define the primary issues that are causing your current dissatisfaction. Be very specific so you can avoid situations with similar problems.
2. **Proceed with caution.** Finally making the decision to move on can be intoxicating, but put the kibosh on your desire to tell your co-workers that you're "outta here." Looking for a new situation while you have the security of your current job will allow you to take your time and find what you're really looking for.
3. **Do some research.** Take a look at what's happening in your industry. What opportunities are out there? What obstacles might you face? Will your current skills and education allow you to get where you want to go in the next year. In five years? In ten? If adding to your qualifications will open more doors for you, take steps now to learn a new skill or gain additional education.
4. **Get help.** Sometimes you can't see the trees through the forest. If you're still having trouble figuring out what you want to be when you grow up, try joining forces with a professional coach or career counselor.
5. **Be persistent.** During this tough economy, persistence is more important than ever. Once you identify some organizations you'd like to work for, make yourself known there. Forget relying on help wanted ads or job opening notices. Instead, schedule a meeting with the hiring manager and tell them what you can do for them. If they don't have a position open now, perhaps they'll create one. At the very least, they'll remember you when a good fit does arise.
6. **Make a smooth transition.** When you do find a new position, make sure to attend to important details. Be sure that you are covered by your current health insurance before your new policy takes over, and decide how you are going to handle any 401(k), 403(b), or other employer-sponsored retirement plans you might have.



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As you explore new opportunities, make sure you address the issues that you now know are important to your job satisfaction. Don't get fooled into thinking that any situation is better than the one you are in. As you thoughtfully consider your options ask yourself questions like:

- Do I like the tasks and duties associated with this job?
- Will this job utilize my skills and experience?
- Is there the right amount of room from growth?
- How does the job gel with most of my natural preferences?
- What kind of person is my potential boss? Does s/he seem like a person who shares my values, ethics, and philosophies?
- Do my potential co-workers seem happy and engaged?
- What is the organizational structure of the company?
- What is the company culture?
- Would I be part of a team, or would I be working alone?
- Does this job meet my financial expectations?



Write down the three primary needs you need to consider as you look for new work:

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.



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Final Thoughts

Most of us have struggled with job satisfaction at one point or another in our lives. But finding a new job isn't easy these days, making job dissatisfaction more frustrating than ever.

The good news is that you've learned it's possible to find job satisfaction in the job you have right now. You now know the areas that contribute most to your job satisfaction, know how to recognize and remedy burnout, and have ten strategies that will help you get the most from your current job. And, if in completing the exercises in this workbook, you've discovered that the *only* way you can find job satisfaction is to move on, I've given you six solid strategies to help you do so.

I wish you luck in attaining job satisfaction—and I also know that your self-reflection, preparation, and action steps will make the difference you need to make positive changes. Today's tough economy need not be a barrier to achieving satisfaction and fulfillment in your work life.

Let me know how these strategies are working for you—and, of course, let me know how else I can help.

To your success!

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About Dorothy Tannahill Moran

Dorothy Tannahill-Moran is a life coach focusing on people 40+ making personal change, transition and retirement. Dorothy started her career as a vocational coordinator and



then moved into high tech. She “protired” at 49, leaving a fast growth 21 year career in operations management. Since then, she has recreated her career as a life coach, effectively utilizing the tools she developed as an operations manager. During her career, she specialized in redesigning “full systems” to save money and throughput time. The redesign work she would do entailed changing computer systems, developing new processes and changing people’s jobs due to organization realignment. Due to the dimensions of these changes, she developed great skill in facilitating change for both organizations and the individuals. This expertise has translated into work she does with people

to help them make effective life changes both large and small. She understands that change is a process both internal and external and therefore is available to all people to undertake, once they know the tools and process.

Dorothy writes, lectures, coaches and gives workshops on personal change, transition and retirement.

See her website at [Next Chapter, New Life](#)

Read her blog and sign up for automatic postings directly to your email at: [Next Chapter New Life Blog](#)

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