



careergasm

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**CHECK
YOUR
BAGGAGE**

Warning: I'm about to get all up in your business.

I'm going to suggest that maybe the problem isn't just your crappy job. It's you. I may be right or I may be wrong, but I'd like you to at least consider the possibility. If you're feeling frustrated or exhausted or stuck in your career, maybe it's not your job that's weighing you down; maybe it's all that heavy crap that you carry around.

Let's take a look at your baggage.

Here's a sample of some of the stuff people carry around with them at work. Maybe you carry some of this stuff around too.

- low self-esteem
- workaholic
- control freak
- need for validation
- perfectionism
- severe anxiety
- boundary issues
- approval seeking
- passive aggressive
- untreated depression
- constant need to be right
- combative
- won't listen
- easily offended
- unwilling to compromise
- self sabotage

What's some of the stuff you carry around with you at work? Try to think of at least three things. They may or may not be on the list above. Write them down.

Some of the stuff I carry around with me at work:

You've just got to deal with those issues. I say that without judgment. We all have issues – you, me, and every other human being on the planet. If this stuff is getting in your way at work or in life, you need to devote some of your energy to doing something about it.

My personal struggle has been with approval seeking, and excessive striving, and perfectionism. **Perfectionism is a noose you knot yourself.** For most of my life it really got in the way of my happiness. Big time. I wouldn't say I've totally slayed that dragon yet – it still creeps up on me sometimes – but I've made huge strides and I'm much happier for it. If you struggle with some of this stuff and don't deal with it, you're just going to carry it with you to your next job.

So, the question is

Is it your job or is it you?

Maybe you don't have the confidence to speak up at work. Maybe you're doing too much work with not enough pay and you're burning out. Well, did you ask for a raise? Did you ask for a reduced workload? You have to ask for the things you want.

I have a friend who is consistently disappointed with her husband for not helping out enough with the house and the kids. But she won't ask for help or tell him what she needs. In fact, she pretends everything is fine. Meanwhile, there's all this accumulated resentment. Your spouse is not a mind reader. Neither is your boss. **You may or may not get what you want, but you gotta ask.**

Take a look at the list of the stuff you carry around with you at work – the three things you just wrote down. Pick one issue from that list – maybe the thing that’s getting in your way the most. What’s one thing you can do this week to start dealing with that issue? It can be a baby step or a big step. Maybe it’s reading a helpful book. Maybe it’s speaking to a doctor or therapist. Maybe it’s having a conversation that is long overdue, or talking about it with a friend or colleague. Maybe it’s joining some kind of support group or enrolling in a workshop. Or maybe it’s just a commitment to notice when the issue creeps up so you can start to correct it.

What’s one thing you can do this week to start dealing with one of your issues?

MOVING FORWARD

Bailing on your job without examining your issues is like bailing water out of a boat with a hole in the bottom. It won’t work. You can bail until you’re bone-weary, but you’re still going to get wet. That’s what happens when you focus on the symptoms of a problem instead of the cause.

Let me be clear. Just because you have some issues (and, honey, we ALL have issues), it’s no reason to stay in a job that sucks until you’ve battled all of your demons or slayed all of your psychological dragons. That takes a lifetime...if you’re lucky.

You are going to be a work in progress for your whole life, but you’re going for progress, not perfection. Don’t let this stuff get in the way of making an important change, but don’t ignore it either.

If you're yearning for a change in your career, do it. But if you don't also deal with some of this stuff you're just going to carry it with you to the next destination. Ask yourself, *how am I getting in my own way?* Make a commitment to work on that stuff alongside any other ambitions and desires you may have. I know from experience that doing so will not only make for a happier career, but a happier life as well.

Take a moment and make a commitment to yourself. Articulate what you want to work on and any short-term or long-term actions you want to take to deal with it.

My commitment to myself:

Congrats, friend. Self-awareness and a commitment to action are two powerful engines on the road to feel-good work (and a feel-good life, for that matter). I hope you feel a little lighter already.