

Recognizing When It's Time To Change Careers

from the American Counseling Association

Not so many ago many Americans spent their entire work-lives in the employment of just one company. It was recognized that working hard and meeting goals almost always meant pay raises, promotions and, most importantly, job security.

But these days it's difficult to feel secure in almost any job, regardless of how well you've performed. Factors beyond your control can affect the job you're doing, or even whether that job will exist tomorrow.

Combine that type of work environment with factors such as feeling bored, unchallenged and unmotivated in your current position and you may be considering changing careers.

A mid-life career change can seem frightening and daunting at first, especially in these days of high unemployment rates. But it's worth considering if your current position has you feeling unhappy, dissatisfied and insecure.

Start by asking yourself questions that will help you better understand if this is the right time to consider something new:

- Do you find yourself dreading going to work each day?
- Are Sunday afternoons depressing because Monday morning and work are approaching?
- Is it hard to get a sense of contentment or accomplishment from the work you do?
- Do you find it difficult to be interested in your job and field of work?
- Do you feel your abilities and experience are being underused?
- Are the values of the organization and your work often in conflict with your personal values?

Answering yes to three or more of those questions is a strong sign that you may be ready for a career change. To start considering your options, visit your local library or bookstore and browse the many career change books that are available. They can help you begin to identify your interests, abilities and values.

A stronger approach is to meet with a professional counselor specializing in career and employment guidance. He or she can provide resources such as interest and personality tests that will help in narrowing your focus and developing a plan of action. A professional counselor can help you clarify your goals and narrow down possible careers. When that self-assessment is complete, then it's time to begin chasing that new career.

Being unsatisfied in your work is always unpleasant and can lead to serious problems. But done correctly, a career change can bring a sense of control over your life and excitement about the opportunities that lie ahead.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcornet@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

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