



Think positively; there are things you can do to be happier at work

love the job you're in!

You don't need to bid your boss adieu to have a fulfilling professional life. In a few easy steps, you can get a whole new attitude and learn to love your job—cranky co-workers, overwhelming deadlines, and all.

BY KRISTINA GRISH

It used to be that when you felt dissatisfied with your 9-to-5 gig, you spruced up your résumé and got a new job. But with many companies holding firm on their hiring freezes, the average employee feels trapped

where she is—and isn't too happy about it. In fact, a *shape.com* poll found that 23 percent of readers would give notice today if they could, with another 54 percent rating their job satisfaction as just

two or three out of a possible five. “Thanks to the dismal economic climate, we’ve gone from an attitude of ‘Take this job and shove it’ to ‘I’d better learn to love it,’” says Roberta Chinsky Matuson, a career coach and the president of Human Resource Solutions, a consulting firm in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Luckily, experts say you can have a more rewarding work life right where you are—without a new title or larger paycheck. We gathered your biggest office issues and asked career coaches how to handle them. Follow their advice to turn the job you have into the one of your dreams.

WORK WOE “My boss said there won’t be raises this year.”

If everyone’s annual pay increase has been axed from the budget, look for other ways to gain validation for a job well done. “Working toward a goal—say, scoring a more interesting assignment—can help you feel more fulfilled, even if your paychecks are staying the same,” says Todd Harris, Ph.D., the director of research for PI Worldwide, a management-consulting firm. “Studies show that when you can see a clear link between effort and reward, you feel like you’re accomplishing something—making you happier and more satisfied in your current situation.”

Ask your boss if there’s anything extra you can help out with. “Managers have been experiencing increased pressure to do more with less,” Harris says. “Yours will be thrilled that you’d like to take on extra work.” Then, when raises get reinstated (fingers crossed!), your additional responsibilities will help you get a bigger piece of the pie.

13%
of *Shape* readers link their job satisfaction to their salary

▶ WORK WOE “My co-workers complain all day long.”

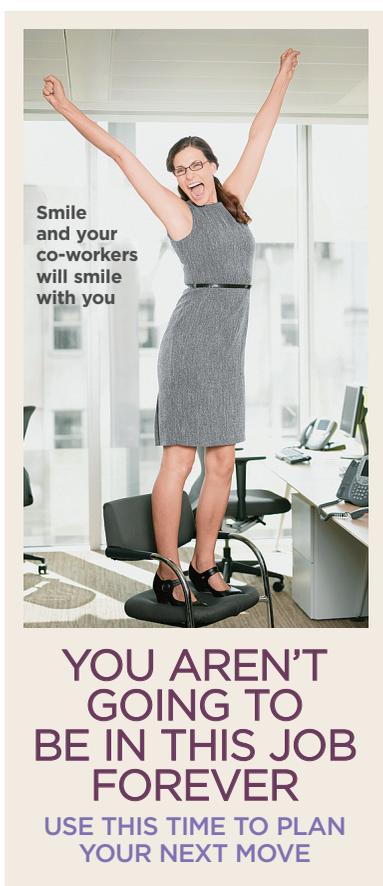
Misery may love company, but it can also bring you down. Poor team spirit in the workplace can boost your risk of depression by 61 percent, according to a study in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. “Listening to negative people is draining—it takes a lot of energy afterward to remind yourself of what you *do* like about your current situation,” says Richard Chang, Ph.D., the author of *The Passion Plan*. He suggests limiting the time you spend with complainers, and if you get cornered by a co-worker griping about the vacation policy, being empathetic without adding too much to the conversation. “Stop encouraging them and they’ll look for an ally in someone else,” says Chang.

24%
of you say
doing “important”
work is
motivating

▶ WORK WOE “My boss never seems to be satisfied—it’s driving me crazy.”

A bad manager can actually be a health hazard: A study in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* found that having a supervisor who stresses you out increases your odds of having a heart attack during the next decade by up to 64 percent. “If you work for someone who is overly critical and demanding, ask to go over specific ways that you can do a better job moving forward,” suggests Harris. “Getting feedback on what your manager would like you to do differently will show her you really want to improve your relationship.” Unfortunately, this doesn’t always work. “Sometimes personalities clash or you can’t seem to do anything right,” says Maggie Mistal, a career coach and the host of

Making a Living With Maggie on Sirius XM. “In these cases, you have to put your head down, do your job, and try to limit your interactions. But you also have to change your own attitude. Make a decision not to take anything personally—reminding yourself that your boss’s snide remarks have nothing to do with you will help bring your emotions under control.”



▶ WORK WOE “My job isn’t all that meaningful.”

“If you spend your day filing or answering phones, volunteer outside the office,” says Jennifer Remling, the author of *Carve Your Own Road*. “Work on something you care about. It will challenge you and make you feel good, not to mention positively impact others.” Spread those good

feelings around by sending an office-wide e-mail mentioning that you’ll be visiting a food bank and asking if anyone cares to join you. You’ll foster team spirit *and* show your boss you’re a go-getter with interests outside your cube.

▶ WORK WOE “There’s no room for me to grow.”

You aren’t going to be in this job forever (though it may feel like it), so use this time to plan where you want your career to go. “Picturing your future reminds you that you’re working toward something and helps you feel in charge,” says Remling. She suggests writing down a two-year plan, detailing specific things you’re looking to change. For example, is your current company too corporate? Keep an eye out for openings at smaller businesses. Doing your prep work now—updating your résumé, contacting a headhunter, networking—will make you excited about your next step.

▶ WORK WOE “I don’t think I’m in the right field.”

Rather than allow your discontent to bog you down, explore a hobby: Train for a triathlon, volunteer to be a substitute teacher, sign up for a sports league, or take a cooking or art class. You may discover a hidden talent that gives you an idea of what your true calling may be. “Once you discover a pursuit that makes you happy, start getting involved in it,” says Kathleen Hall, Ph.D., the author of *Alter Your Life*. “You’ll learn if it’s *the* thing for you—and make valuable contacts along the way.”

19%
of you
don’t know what
your dream
job would be

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