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THE 4 STAGES OF BREAKING UP WITH YOUR HAVE-TO-JOB

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Hello there, and welcome back to The Career Reset podcast. I am your host today, Mel Savage, and I am the founder and CEO of The Career Reset.

Before I even start, I just want to let you know how much I truly appreciate you and the fact that you're here because I know that you have lots of podcast choices out there. My job, as I see it, is to give you the inspiration and the insight you need to create what I call a *want-to-career* that gives you meaning and purpose and still pays the bills.

Today, I want to talk to the folks who find themselves in a job that they don't love. I know that one of the reasons a lot of people are listening to this podcast right now is because you're toughing it out. You're toughing it out in a job that you don't love and you're looking for a way out. I know that feeling.

Over the course of this podcast, we're going to talk a lot about ideas, tools, how-tos, and inspiration that are going to help you find, get, and hold onto that want-to-career. A really big part of leaving that job you don't love or what I call the *have-to-job* behind is the mental motivation it takes to actually do the work to make that transition. The mental motivation comes from, first and foremost, understanding the benefits of really having a want-to-career.

That's what can really motivate you - really understanding the benefit of what you're going to get if you do the work, achieve and get that want-to-career. All those amazing and wonderful changes will happen in your life when you finally achieve that goal of loving what you do every day.

But I have to be honest with you. Most people are more motivated by the fear of pain versus the possibility of joy. It's the way we're wired. Probably because that's kind of the way we survived as a human race. Before Uber could deliver every meal to our nice, cozy little homes, we had to fend for ourselves. And that fear of not surviving is what drove us and motivated us to get off our butts.

As much as I would prefer to spend some time talking to you about all the amazing, wonderful things that are going to happen in your life when you get that want-to-career, I'm actually going to spend the time today focusing

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on really getting clear on the kind of soup you're currently swimming in. And what's going to happen to you if you don't do anything if you just let it ride? What's going to happen?

I'm going to take you through the four stages of breaking up with your have-to-job. Because if you're staying in a job you don't love, you're basically working your way through these four stages of breaking up with your have-to-job. You may not even realize you're breaking up with the job because eventually, that is what's going to happen, whether you want it to happen or not.

As we go through the podcast today, I'm going to talk about the different stages, what it feels like to be in those stages, and what you can do if you're in that stage before it's too late. Before we go into each of those stages though, I really want to start with a little bit of perspective.

In general, we spend about 35% of our adult life working and of the other 65%, a lot of that is spent in bed. Over the hundred percent of the time we have in our adult life, 35% is working. So it's really hard to believe that you or anyone else wouldn't want to make the most of that 35%. That's a third of your life. But instead, a lot of us spend that 35% doing something that makes us sad or mad or exasperated or apathetic or exhausted or frustrated, a bunch of different things.

You pick the emotion and in general, your emotional reaction is often based on how long you've been in that situation. So if you're finding yourself in this situation, you're spending 35% of your life struggling in some capacity.

And I'm going to go even more dramatic than that for a second. I'm going to say that you're spending 35% of your life *sacrificing* so that you can have security and enjoyment for the rest of your life.

That's the logic. That's why we do it. That's why we stay in a job we don't love where we essentially "*sacrifice* ourselves" if you want to get dramatic about it, to pay for the other parts of life where we need security. And we want to have a good time. That's the logic. But is that really logical? Are you really getting what you pay for when you struggle when you tolerate and sacrifice that 35% of your life? And you know what the short answer is? Not really.

Because the energy and the willpower that it takes for you to really tolerate and cope with that job that you don't love, with that have-to-job, and how you show up at work, take away from the enjoyment in the rest of your life. It takes away from your social life. You're too exhausted to go out.

It takes away from your family. You might be impatient with your kids. You don't spend time with them like you would. You don't go and play with them. Maybe you're not helping them with their homework in a way that's really the most nurturing way that you can be.

You may be impatient with your spouse. You might say the wrong thing. You might not be as patient as your spouse needs you to be. Or maybe your spouse starts to resent you for your attitude or for the time that you're spending at work. Or maybe even for that wrong thing that you're saying at that moment, out of frustration and exhaustion because you don't have the patience to really show up as your best self.

And then there's what you do to take care of yourself personally. It takes away from that as well because the more exhausted you get, that's when you are too tired to go to the gym one day and then another day. Or you

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don't really want to face how you feel about your career. So you start creating a buffer. You start creating a buffer to really avoid those feelings. And that buffer could be things like how you eat, how much TV you watch, how much you're sitting on your butt versus doing things, and how much you're closing yourself off from your family and friends.

So this idea that putting up with work is a worthy sacrifice may not be totally true. Or that idea too, that people say, *"Oh, I work to live."* That mentality doesn't really pay off. The return isn't delivering as high as it could be. But despite all of these side effects of staying in a job that's not working for you, staying in this have-to-job, people still stay. You still stay and I totally get it.

I totally get it because I did it too. I lived for years tolerating and letting myself *"suffer"* in a career situation that was really exhausting for me. It was dragging me down and I didn't just do it once. I did it many, many times and I thought it was normal. I thought that was the cost of making money to take care of my family, to buy all the things I wanted. To have, all that enjoyment that I was looking for.

Isn't work supposed to be miserable? Isn't that why it's called work? That's how I felt about it. That's how I looked at it until one day *enough was enough* and I started to get really real with myself on what I was doing. But I got to tell you, I was a pretty tenacious gal and I told myself that the reason I was sticking it out was because I have a *never give up* attitude.

And I was really proud of that. I was also really proud of the fact that I could figure anything out. And so that's the story I was telling myself. *That I don't give up.* I persevere, I find the solution, and I figure out how to get it done because I'm a smart lady and I can do that.

But the truth was that I was just afraid. I was scared that I couldn't be successful anywhere else doing anything else. So I waited and I toughed it out and I sacrificed my life and I waited until I was stage four before that *enough was enough* moment actually happened for me before I decided to make a move.

And I had dug a pretty big hole for myself. Even though I eventually crawled out of that hole, the recovery took a lot longer and was a lot harder than if I had simply believed in myself earlier and made the move earlier, just be honest with what was going on, and put myself first.

I get that when you stay in this type of situation, in a *have-to* situation, you think it's a safe decision. You think that you're making a necessary decision - a responsible decision. You think you're protecting stuff - your family, your ability to pay the bills, your social standing. Your ego is about what you can and can't achieve.

Or maybe you think you just don't have any choice in the matter. This is what it is. I have to do this. That's a really tough situation to be in, a have-to situation. Which is why I call it a *have-to-job*. And as adults, you say to yourself, life isn't supposed to be easy all the time. Maybe you just got to, suck it up and put your big boy pants on, or your big girl pants on. It's time to be responsible and learn to put up with the crap and play it safe for a little bit. People are depending on me. Nothing's perfect. I can do this.

We have all this stuff, all these rationales that we say to ourselves and really, it's just a lot of BS. The reality is that staying in *an energy-sucking, just-trying-to-keep-it-together, going-home-exhausted,*

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hoping-something's-going-to-miraculously-show-up-to-save-you type of situation is actually the riskiest thing you can do for yourself and anyone or anything else you're trying to protect because it's not sustainable.

So the thing that you thought was responsible and safe is actually the riskiest and most reckless thing you can do. And I know that wasn't your intention, but that's what it ends up being. If it is risky and reckless, how is that taking care of your family or your stuff or your social status or your self-worth? How does it even make sense? The fact is, it doesn't.

That's why we're going to discuss the four stages of breaking up with your have-to-job. The reason I want to share this with you is so that 1) you know what's coming, 2) you can assess where you are right now, and 3) you can proactively decide what you want to do about it.

The first stage of breaking up with your have-to-job is called the COPING stage, and this is where you tell yourself that everything is fine. It's just a job. You can handle it. You make excuses for the situation. You rationalize your decision to hold out. You don't really have a plan to fix it. You just stay in this *I can handle it mode* and you look for things outside of your work to fulfill your life, to build your energy.

And a key indicator that you're in this phase is if you actually hear yourself saying the word, *fine* a lot. It's fine. I'm fine. She's fine. She always acts that way. It's okay. You're saying things to convince yourself that the decision you're making is the right decision.

When you're at dinner parties and when someone asks you about work, you'll say something like, it's fine. It's just a job. I'm just there for now to pay the bills, or until my husband or wife establishes their business, or until the kids are older, or when I have more time to look for a job. You're basically pushing off, taking any kind of action besides staying in this coping and tolerating mode.

When you realize you're in this stage, I recommend you start the process of putting together your career plan. And when I say career plan, I'm not talking about your development plan that you have at work. I'm talking about your personal career plan that goes beyond the company that you're working in right now.

When you're in the coping stage, it is the perfect time to take action because you still have the energy to do it. Your self-confidence hasn't taken too much of a beating. Your mindset is more easily managed. You haven't dug yourself into a hole. You're not desperate to get out of there and you can take the time to find the best situation for you. You're not in a panic. You can go at your own pace. You can start to figure out what the right action is for you.

Is it about changing companies, changing departments and the existing company, changing careers altogether? You can completely start exploring with an open mind. The reason you should start your transition or this transformation in stage one of your have-to-job is just things aren't so bad yet and you're able to focus on what you need to focus on.

However, it is precisely because things aren't so bad yet that most people don't do anything about it. *"It's not that bad. I can handle it."* That's what you're thinking. You don't think that you need help or that you need to change anything right away. It's not a crisis situation yet and you think you're better off playing it safe, waiting it out a bit.

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As humans, we often don't react until we are in crisis mode. And then when we're in crisis mode, it's panic time. That's when we want answers and we want them fast and that's also when we start making bad decisions when we're in panic mode. But stage one is not a crisis situation and that's why a lot of people aren't motivated to make a move or do anything about their career. So they just keep on coping.

If that's you, if you are in the coping stage, if you're in stage one, my recommendation is that it can't hurt to start making plans to start looking. You can play both sides. You can go to work and cope. Don't rock the boat. You don't have to turn everything upside down and you can still empower yourself with options. Maybe your current job will get better. Who knows? If it does, great. If not, which is more often the case, then you're not starting from scratch, you have a plan in place.

Let's move on to stage two and the second stage of breaking up with your have-to-job, is what I call the PUSH stage. This is where you need to push yourself to go to work. The toleration and the coping that you had in stage one is starting to turn to frustration. You're not stressed all the time, but you're more easily annoyed or stressed out than you would be if you were operating as your best self.

You have a shorter fuse and the reason this happens is because it's taking more and more energy to tolerate, to cope, to hang in there that you don't have a lot left to show up as your best self for the people you work with or even for your personal life. And guess what? People are going to start noticing. You're going to get people saying to you, "*Is everything okay? You don't seem yourself.*"

People are going to notice when you're not yourself. But here's the kicker, you're not performing like yourself either. Meaning, the quality of your work is starting to erode. So at the push stage, the whole thing is becoming a bigger and bigger energy suck. You're exhausted at the end of the day. You start going out less. You start canceling plans with people. You start to skip more and more workouts or let go of your self-care - whatever your ritual is.

And you start getting a lot of negative or destructive thoughts and ideas in your head. People are annoying you more. You start to take things more personally. You're more impatient. So you start to act out in ways that reflect those feelings - those feelings of annoyance and impatience and fear because you start to take things personally.

It's when you get to the stage that you start thinking, "*Huh, I think I need to make a change.*" But often, what happens is that you're either too tired to put a ton of effort into it so you procrastinate or you take the first thing that comes along without any planning or purpose and sometimes you jump from the frying pan into the fire.

Again, the minute you realize you're entering this phase, I recommend getting some help and proactively planning your next move because as this stage goes on, it gets tougher and tougher to motivate yourself. I really recommend getting proactive about getting help.

Activate the parts of your support network that are going to help you get that mental motivation that you need - your mentor, and your supporters. Get the help of a coach to get you motivated and accountable to get things done.

The third stage is the DRAINED stage and it is what it says it is. You're drained. You're tired. You're unmotivated. You're starting to get burnt out. And you're beginning to feel trapped. You're having trouble hauling your butt out

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of bed. You're pressing the snooze button three and four times, or you're telling Alexa to snooze or whatever. You stopped exercising as much or doing more and more things to buffer or numb those feelings.

Emotional eating or some other emotionally driven activity like binge-watching TV, or overworking. Emotional eating is my thing, so that's always top of mind with me. You're not going out. You avoid life in general. And the biggest part of this is your performance is really starting to suffer. You're so unmotivated to show up at work that you just can't deliver that 110% for work anymore because you just don't care as much. You've stopped caring.

And that's when you start to get really confused about what you really want for yourself or for your career and for your life. Because you've just stopped caring and you feel lost and scared and maybe even a little depressed, so you don't know what's wrong and you don't know where to turn, and you're starting to get really foggy about what you should be doing next.

This is when you're at the highest risk of making a bad decision and when you need the most help. And the help you need isn't about finding another job, which is absolutely something that you eventually will need to do. The help you need at this stage is really to address your mindset. You need to find a way to get back to your best self and refocus.

And at this point, unless you have a really strong experienced mentor, you're going to want to get the help of a coach. Both a life coach and a career coach can help you refocus and help you clear your mind enough to figure out what your next step is.

And then there's stage four, which I call the PANIC stage. The fear that you are feeling in stage three is more apathetic avoidance. But now that fear has turned to panic. And in some ways, that's kind of good because panic actually spurs you into action versus being apathetic. But because you're kind of at the end of the rope, and you're panicking, you're at a really high risk of making an emotional decision.

Your energy reserves are empty. Your performance is at an all-time low, which you can actually see, but you can't seem to bring yourself to do anything about it. And that it's just a matter of time at this point. It's like watching a car crash in slow motion. You either wait it out until a decision is made for you by the organization. Or you're going to make a snap decision without a plan in place.

And it's ironic because the whole reason that you stayed this long in this situation was because you thought you were making the responsible decision. But as things have deteriorated so much, that idea of responsibility has kind of gone out the window. Now you're just waiting for the inevitable, praying for a miracle solution or making a snap decision on your career without a plan.

None of those things are responsible in any way. They're completely self-preservationist. Your personal life is probably not going well, either. I was lucky enough to have a super supportive husband, but my friends never saw me. I was rarely on social media. I gained 40 pounds of which I've only lost 20 I still have to work to do on that. I didn't want to do anything and I was definitely depressed. Not diagnosed as depressed, but when I look back on it, I was definitely depressed.

I know stage 4 sounds freakin' awful and I wish I was painting an overly dramatic picture, but I'm not. This is actually what happens to people and I've seen it not just to me but to lots of people. And if you ask me, it's a way more painful, difficult, drawn out, and scary road to recover from. It can take years, honestly, to get your mojo

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fully back together, to feel fully like yourself again, and be your best self. Particularly, if you're trying to do it on your own.

But I do want to say this, figuring it out is possible. But you're going to need help. Like stage three, I recommend help for getting your mindset focused on rediscovering and reconnecting with your best self. Choosing to stay at any stage of a have-to-job is not sustainable. Why would you do it? I know people use time, money, and responsibility as excuses. I'm going to call them excuses because they are.

But the truth is, the reason that we stay in these situations is a combination of a few different things. Likely, there's a piece of it where you lack confidence. Will you be able to get another job? Are you good enough to do anything else? You don't know where to start. You don't want to get it wrong. You want to make sure that you get all the facts, but you don't know how to do that and you don't even know where to go for help.

A lot of the time what people do is that they don't ask for help. Like me, I thought I was super smart and I had it all together. I was a senior management person and I figured everything out in my career on my own so I could figure this out too. And I didn't even go for help because of my own ego. Because I figured I could do it myself. But the truth is, this is a really tough situation. The longer you wait, the longer you stay in the situation.

Everybody needs help. I don't care how smart you are, or if you're in the C-Suite, you still need help figuring it out. Ultimately, the whole thing can feel really intimidating to figure out and tackle on your own. It feels uncertain and it feels scary, which is normal. But no matter what stage you're at, it's never too late.

It's harder to make a change for sure. The longer you stay, the deeper you are into the stages. You may need a stronger support network or you may need to hire an awesome coach or both. You may need to get the support of friends, get the support of supporters, and advocates in your support network and get it all working for you. It doesn't matter. Do what you need to do to get out of that situation.

But just know that it is a hundred percent possible and the very first thing you need is the desire. You need to want it. And the second thing is you need to be willing to do the work. And the work includes not just writing resumes and filling in questionnaires about what it is you want to do next. It is about that. But it's also about doing the work to figure out what's going on in your head, to help yourself get refocused on more constructive thoughts that are going to move you forward.

And that's the piece that a lot of people get intimidated by. But it's the piece that's actually going to move you forward the fastest. And I know that speed is important when you're in situations like this.

Commit yourself to doing that mental work. Then with a clear head, you can really clearly sit down and figure out what you want in a way that gives you confidence, in a way that helps you put the plan together to get you there. And put together really a strategically aligned support system to help you get there as well.

What I'd love you to do is go to the show notes at thecareerreset.com/02, and take a second in the comments to share what stage you're in. Share how you're feeling about it right now. And then also share this - If you had no fear and could do anything, what kind of action would you take? And if you want to get reminded of these questions, I'm also putting these questions in the show notes. What stage are you in? How does it feel? And if you had no fear and could do anything, what action would you take?

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Next week I am talking all about the path to your potential and the path to your potential is going to help you understand the roadmap - the path you need to take to realistically and sustainably make a career change that works for you.

Thanks so much and I'll talk to you next time. If you're finding good value in what I'm sharing and you want to learn more, please subscribe to the podcast so you don't miss a thing, and share this podcast with anyone who you think might benefit from having this conversation. In the meantime, I challenge you to think about what stage of your have-to-career you're currently in and what you want to do about it. I'll talk to you soon.

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