

## **JOB & LIFE DISSATISFACTION A COMMON WOE**

**By Ginger E. Blume, Ph.D.**

If you're unhappy with your work, you're not alone. Half of all Americans are dissatisfied with their jobs. According to research, the decline in job satisfaction is found among workers of all ages and across all income brackets.

Job satisfaction means different things to different people. There are many aspects to work life---income, job security, fringe benefits, the commute, co-worker relationships and the overall work environment, among others. People's priorities vary, so any one or a combination of these factors may contribute to an individual's dissatisfaction with work.

Unfortunately, the dissatisfaction does not simply end at the workplace. Life affects work and work affects life. Many people who experience stress at work find that it spills over into their personal life. Through attempting to "mentally compartmentalize problems at work," some people try to avoid this spillage. Conversely, there is a positive relationship between meaningful work and family satisfaction. People who are able to improve their work experience often see an enhancement in their family life.

Research also shows that happy people have fewer illnesses, fewer absences, and are more successful in their jobs. Unhappy, pessimistic people not only make those around them less happy, but also cost employers more through increased insurance claims, more absences due to illnesses, more work complaints and more problems with co-workers. Psychologists can help people develop methods for improving attitudes, reducing dysfunctional habits, reducing conflicts with others, and modifying negative behaviors that contribute to a downward emotional spiral.

Personally, there are numerous small changes you can make to enhance your job satisfaction. For instance, if your work environment is depressing, bring in fresh cut flowers to sit on your desk. If you lack windows, purchase a full spectrum desk light (they simulate natural sunlight) for your work area. Like most people, you probably spend a majority of your adult life at work. It is worth it to make some simple, small changes that can have a major impact on how you feel while you're there.

### **Tips for Maintaining Balance at Work**

- Take a break. Frequent short mini-breaks during the day allow you to breathe deeply and relax your mind preventing stress build-up.
- Exercise. Exercise releases endorphins that help relieve stress. Shoulder shrugs, foot rotations, and other small movements can make a big difference in your overall comfort.
- Recognize the difference between the things you can control and the things you cannot. Make a list of these two categories. Starting today, make a pact with yourself to stop stressing about the things in your job you have no control over.
- Take note of the good work you do and give yourself credit for it. Set short-term goals and allow yourself to take satisfaction in achieving them.
- Try not to personalize every piece of criticism you receive. Look at negative comments as constructive criticism that allows you to improve your work.
- Delegate or share work when possible. Alternate boring, routine jobs with more

diverse aspects of your work.

- Job stress builds when our minds are constantly focused on work. Strive for balance in your life. Make time for family, friends, and hobbies.
- Determine exactly what is stressing you out. Is it your job? Your home life? Your relationship? Identify the root of the problem in order to resolve it. If you can't do this along, hire a coach to help you figure it out.

With the increase in technology, creative work hours, virtual offices, etc. our work and personal lives have become increasingly enmeshed. This has made it difficult for people to maintain firm boundaries between these two aspects of their lives. As a result, old solutions may no longer be effective. It is important to recognize when you need to develop new solutions and new approaches to solving life's problems. When an old solution isn't working, don't persist. Search for new ideas, ask others what they've done to keep work and personal aspects of their life separate, or consult a professional who can assist you.

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