

Listening to Your Restlessness

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Have you ever stayed in a job just a little too long? Ignored your restlessness? Here's how you do it.

Staying too long usually begins with some great experiences: Good people, opportunity and challenge, maybe some interesting travel. But you keep growing and changing—and maybe your company doesn't grow and change in the same direction or depth. So you get a little uneasy and restless, and you start thinking about the whats and wheres and hows of your next steps. But you're stubborn and loyal. So you decide to stay a little bit longer, trying several strategies over a period of months or even years.

Speaking from experience, I stubbornly tried the following strategies in my own staying-a-little-to-long-in-a-job phase several years ago. In retrospect, they were each necessary and refining in my own desires and process.

- 1. I questioned myself. "Come on Patty! Just comply with the way this place works."*
- 2. I tweaked my responsibilities. I found ways to spend more of my time doing the parts of the job I was still excited about.*
- 3. I tried to keep learning skills and depth of character—even in the face of things that I was having a hard time reconciling.*
- 4. And I tried just making other parts of my life better and richer so that I could demand less of my work hours.*

Though each of those strategies was useful for a time, none was a permanent fix. In the final year or so I began to find ways to respect and pay attention to my restlessness in some new ways. Then I began to turn my stubbornness towards my own next steps which included leaving graciously and entering a new chapter of my life's work.

Quote of the Month

In a Norwegian fairy tale, a hero comes to a crossroads where there are three signs. The first sign says, "He who travels down this road will return unharmed and unchanged." The second says, "He who travels this path has the option of returning, and may or may not returned unharmed and unchanged." The third sign says, "He who travels here will never return and will most assuredly be profoundly changed."

Which road would you choose this month?