

Coping with loss: When it's hard leaving a job

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I recently left a job with an organisation I was with for over 15 years. I'd had a several different roles within this time and some years had been more enjoyable than others. But at the point of leaving, I'd describe my role as one of the most fulfilling of my career, and the sense of loss I felt was huge.



Don't get me wrong, I handed my notice in as I'd found a job with another organisation that I wanted to move onto. My experience of loss was one that came through decisions I had made by choice, but nonetheless, the loss has still been difficult to experience.

I had worked hard to develop myself over the years; I'd studied for qualifications, pushed myself out of my comfort zone to progress and develop in more challenging roles, and created many friendships I valued deeply. I had slowly built a reputation based on my efforts and values and created an identity of kindness, integrity, hard work, and passion for the area I worked in.

I suppose there was a sense of trepidation in leaving; would I have regrets about leaving a place and people that felt like home? Was I going to be good enough for the new job? I now stand on the outside now looking in, no longer one of the pack, knowing that my time there has passed and not yet feeling that same sense of belonging elsewhere.

I hadn't been sleeping well for a few weeks in the build-up to my last day. As I sat on the train on way home from my last day in the office, I felt incredibly flat. Rather than feeling excited about my new job, or teary from all the goodbyes I'd had that week, I felt completely empty and drained, with all these emotions circling that I couldn't articulate.

Knowing what I know about loss has helped me. I have given myself time to reflect on the feelings that have surfaced with this sense of loss. I feel lucky to have people in my life that I can talk to and have given myself time to hear myself and to write things down. This has helped me to articulate what it is I am feeling.



Through this process, I am able to validate how I feel - not how others think I should feel, or what I want to feel, but how I actually feel. Because giving voice to my feelings allows me to validate them, it gives me a way to process them, in my own time.

Time to move forward

This experience of loss for me is by no means a 'job done, box ticked, what's next, please?' I have no doubt it will be a process that ebbs and flows and takes its time. But I know when the feelings of loss feel strong, I have a safe way of validating and giving voice to them, I can let whatever it is I'm feeling surface and let them flow.

It is up to me now to use the learnings I've acquired over the years, to keep the memories that will help me and bring me comfort, and to let go of the stuff that doesn't matter, or serves no purpose. By doing so I bring the best of my time there forward, and I can be fully present in today, in my new job and life, with a sense of gratitude for all that I've had the privilege to experience.

How to process emotions of loss

No matter what a person's loss is in response to, each person's experience is different and takes as long as it takes. Finding a way to process emotions of loss can help you adapt to change so that you can move forward in a way that feels right for you. Here are some things you can do to help you process emotions of loss:

Writing

Writing can be such a helpful and safe way to process [emotions](#). Write a letter to someone else, to you, to your younger self, or write in a journal whatever you feel comes to mind. Put pen to paper (or keyboard to Word) and let the words flow. You don't have to be a great writer or share it with anyone. You can shred it, delete it, burn it if you want – you have given voice to your feelings, whatever they are, and allowed yourself to validate those emotions so you can begin to process them.

Walking

I love to walk in our local woods and take in nature. But wherever you are walking can help you begin to relax, and process what's going on in your head. As you walk and notice your surroundings, you begin to hear yourself so you can reflect on where you are and what you've experienced.

Finding someone to listen to you

Just as with writing, finding someone to talk to can be so helpful. You don't need to [find someone](#) to fix things or tell you what you should feel or do. Just having someone who will hold a space for you to talk without judgement, so you can be heard and give voice to what is going on for you can help hugely.

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