

Stop the Job Suckage.

(now!)

A wee little e-book by Kate Courageous (aka, Kate Swoboda)
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The Job Suckage Story

Originally, the Stop the Job Suckage Challenge was on my website, <http://www.yourcourageouslife.com>. I came up with the series of exercises based both on my own experience letting go of a job, as well as the knowledge I have from working with my coaching clients.

99% of the clients who come to me either think their job Sucks or they are quite aware that they are in the wrong line of work but are willing to tolerate it.

It is my belief that in fact, the jobs are not the core issue of one's unhappiness. And even when they are, it's my belief that we can step into full integrity around our jobs, doing little things that, pulled together, make them better, easier to go to, easier to reconcile with while we ask ourselves what we really want to do.

The goal of taking the Job Suckage Challenge for yourself is threefold. One, it's good to clarify what's really going on. Two, it's great to notice what you have the power to change. Three, if you are in a field or job that isn't a match for you, what pro-active steps can you take to start figuring out what is a match?

Take these day by day. Use a notebook to record your answers to questions. Don't skip ahead a day—allow things time to marinate.

Be gentle with yourself. Small matters. Millimeters matter. Everything counts.

If you enjoy what you read here, feel free to contact me with feedback at the end of your own personal 10-day challenge!

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Enjoy!

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Stop the Job Suckage: Day One of Ten

** This ten-day series is designed to help you kickstart a new way of approaching your job or career. Over ten days, we'll explore how to look objectively at the job/career situation you're in, and clarify where to go next. For some, that might mean not leaving a job but drastically improving it in some meaningful way. For others, this series will provide some help with clarifying your next career move or pave the way to a transition. You're strongly encouraged to complete all ten steps, in order, to see what answers arise.*

So, perhaps you have already decided that *Your Job Sucks*. As a human species, when we think something sucks, we tend to start noticing more and more of the suckage and less and less of what is actually working in our lives. To be fair, the suckage can feel like exactly that—something sucking the life out of you, slowly, via office politics, uninspiring work, threats of downsizing, budget cuts, an impossible workload.

So here's where we'll start with day one—what does a complete, whole, 100% fully alive day look like for you? When do you wake up? Where are you living? Who is living with you? What do you have for breakfast? How do you organize your time? How much time do you spend watching television or checking the internet? How much time do you spend with your kids, friends, partner? How do you feel when you wake up in the morning? What practices do you use to keep yourself grounded? At what time do you start and stop work each day? When are you eating meals? What does your house look like? Are you working from an outside office or an office in your home or for a local company or do you have no office at all—are you completely outdoors? How do you spend your leisure time in the evenings?

Exercise: Write down your ideal day, from start to finish. This would encompass a typical day of you living your ideal life with your ideal career and your ideal control over time and money. In particular, be sure to write not just what you DO with your day, but add in how you FEEL as you're doing it. Are you feeling...alert, awake, peaceful, calm, inspired, overjoyed, passionate, excited, light, free, connected, authentic, joyful, creative...?

Don't worry—I'm not going to ask you to burn sage and chant with this writing, but you will want to complete it before we get into Day Two!

P.S. Don't worry about spelling or grammar. Keep your hand moving. Don't worry about forming a perfect composition. Don't wait for the right time, the right writing notebook, the right pen, the right computer. Hop in and see what happens.

Stop the Job Suckage: Day Two

Congrats, you've arrived at Day Two. If you haven't already read and completed the exercise from Day One, head over there first and see what's the what before reading further—yesterday's practice builds on today's practice. Click the link on the left under Categories that says "job suckage."

Okay—Day Two—so I'm sure many of you may have noticed that there is this thing we do in our modern day society where we get sucked into media advertising and think that if we had SomeThing or SomeThings, we'd be happy. Even though we "get" that it's all a lie, a funny thing happens on the way to the Circus—we buy yet another book or pair of pretty shoes.

Media research has shown again and again that when we buy Things, we envision that the having of the Thing will confer upon us certain qualities that we associate with the Thing. Clothing is an easy example—branding is so obvious. What's the branding of a store like The Gap compared to a store like Bebe? If you buy something from The Gap, you're probably imagining that you'll take on certain qualities such as looking streamlined and being comfortable. The clothing, of course, does not actually DO this—it's just an idea we have. And if you get something from Bebe? You're probably imagining how hot you'll look. Yet again—it's just an idea. The clothing does not automatically make you hot.

So we have tendencies to buy Things that are either ideas or image boosters. The book (ideas) and the pair of pretty shoes (image boosters) can be an excellent accompaniment to the ride, but they won't get you as far as tapping into the qualities and going after the qualities rather than the stuff that we think will get us those qualities.

For example—I'll just out myself here—I have been known to go through a particularly difficult stretch in my life and then go out and get a new book, thinking that that's what will help. That book might promise to organize my life in five easy steps, or teach me positive communication tools, or get me on a new enlightened path to meditation. I buy the book, then read part of the book, then my funk passes so maybe I don't even finish the book.

It was never about the book.

I bought that book because of the qualities I decided it represented; I hoped that (perhaps by osmosis) I would have those qualities because I bought the book.

But—it was never about the book.

So yesterday you wrote about your ideal day, and part of that exercise was to write about how you felt throughout that day. That's important, because for this next step I'd like you to review what you wrote and pick out ten qualities/feelings that stick out to you. Prioritize them if you feel so inclined, or organize them neatly in a binder (just don't go out and buy a book on getting organized to complete this piece of the exercise...)

What does that have to do with stopping the job suckage?

Wait for it...wait for it... I have an idea that if you believe your job sucks, you've worked out all of the angles for why it sucks. We don't need to spend more time there in the Suckage and arrive at those same answers. Looking at your ideal day and the qualities inherent within is part of turning things around at your current job, while you're still there, or moving towards a new career path.

No peeking! In the next exercise, I'll connect these qualities very directly to the Job Suckage issue!

Stop the Job Suckage: Day Three

Badda-bing, Badda-boom! You have now...

- 1.) Written out your ideal day, from start to finish
- 2.) Identified the most important qualities of that ideal day.

(If you haven't done these first two steps and want to see the previous days, click the "job suckage" category to the left of this entry)

Today, Day Three, it's time to get pro-active.

Exercise: Brainstorm at least 3 different ways that each quality could somehow be incorporated into your current job situation. Brainstorm solutions even if you think that they aren't likely to happen (note: fire-bombing is not an option).

For instance, perhaps you work for a large corporate entity and you have identified that "creativity" is a quality to bring into your ideal day. Perhaps you are a receptionist, and the idea that you will ever be able to fulfill your longing to become a mixed-media artist while somehow sitting at that desk seems like it's a total pipe dream. The goal with this exercise is to bring the quality of creativity into your current workspace, because bringing the qualities that are important to you into your current job will make the job seem just a smidge better. It empowers you to create the life you want, with the circumstances you've got—and that is Powerful with a big, phat-ass "P."

Here are some possible brainstorms for such a hypothetical situation:

- 1.) make art on my lunch break
- 2.) organize people from work into a monthly art group
- 3.) carry around art in my wallet/purse/briefcase and look at it often
- 4.) creatively answer the phone—make it a game to see how many creative ways I can think of to make everyone I talk to feel really great as a result of talking to me
- 5.) create a piece of artwork, scan it, set it as my desktop screensaver.

Those are just a few random ideas for one quality—creativity. Brainstorm at least three ideas for each quality you'd like to bring into your current job/workplace. The value of how the small things add up is best explained in a quote I heard once. A CEO had turned around a failing company and people asked him how he did it. He replied, "It's not that we did one thing, 100% better. We did 100 things, just 1% better."

Lots of "1% betters" can add up to "100% better."

Now why would you do this, if you know for absolute certain that you are in the WRONG JOB?

I encourage you to do this because this is the 100% fail-safe way to a.) test out whether the jobby-job is the real issue or the scapegoat issue for why life is not working, and b.) because it's more powerful to make positive shifts even in situations you dislike than it is to wallow, and c.) because if you're still in the WRONG JOB, theoretically you have not up and quit because you need to wait to do that...you need another job, or to build up your biz on the side, or for Obama to push

universal health coverage through so that your kidlets won't end up with untreated cases of rickets because you jumped ship from that employer HMO. And if you're in the WRONG JOB for the next three months or year or whatever, why not make it a little more palatable? Why not build some character? Why wallow when there is possibility around every corner?

I'm kind of laughing at myself as I type this, because I absolutely know that when I started to do this work myself, I was all, "Are you kidding me?" It seemed like a colossal waste of time.

And now, on the other side of all of that, having taken these steps, I see how important it was that I acted with all of the integrity I could muster. I felt stronger and more powerful every time I made a choice to put my all into what I was doing. For someone having doubts, I'd ask—what would that feel like for you?

I'll also add that tomorrow, I'm going to address the "Can'ts" that might have come up for some of you in response to this call for action.

Get started—no need to wait for the right time, the right MOOD, the right pencil, the right...just dive right in and brainstorm at least 3 solutions for each quality that you identified in the previous exercise. Left your qualities list at home? Lost it? The dog ate it? Start brainstorming just based on what you remember, and fill in the blanks later.

Stop the Job Suckage: Day Four

Perhaps you read yesterday's post and decided that you "can't" find any solutions to incorporating a particular quality into your current career/job.

Perhaps because there's no time, no money, or because someone else won't let you.

Yesterday I offered the example of bringing creativity into the workplace, and offered some example hypothetical solutions. One was to see if people from the office would be interested in getting together for a once a month art group.

Resistance—which is codename for that fear-based part of ourselves that doesn't want to try anything new because it would be, ugh, hard—is going to say something about how that's a lot of effort, and you don't even like the people from work anyway, and no one else is creative, and they're not creative the way you want them to be creative, and you don't have a house where that could happen, and you'd feel stupid if you put it out there and no one responded, and...

Okay, cool. So Resistance has all of that come up. Now—what are you more committed to? Resistance, or stopping the Job Suckage?

If, right now, you're more committed to Resistance, that's okay. No need to cue the grand inquisitor. You're not bad or wrong. You're just at where you're at.

If you read that and thought, "No, you don't get it, I'm not committed to Resistance—I want to CHANGE," then we circle right back to that list of brainstorming, and all of the myriad possible ways that life could get shaken up and look different because you were courageous enough to take a new step.

Whatever Resistance comes up for you, accept it and then work through it. Beating down Resistance with happy affirmations does not work (you heard it here, first). Accepting that you have Resistance, that "Can'ts" come up, is part of the work. Courageously making a different choice is another part of the work.

What are you more committed to?

Maybe you're overworked at your office and you want peace. Maybe you brainstormed solutions like, "Delegate work to someone else" because you were thinking of any possibility, but really, you can't imagine that that will ever be a possibility—there are budget cuts, there is no one else who can take the work, etc.

Okay, fine—that might not ever happen. In what other ways can you bring peace to the workplace? Five minute meditation? Closing your eyes and breathing for thirty seconds?

Resistance is going to pop up and go—"But that's not what I WANT, I want the kind of peace that comes from not having as much work; it won't work for me to close my eyes and meditate, I NEED the solution to be that someone else takes this work off of my hands!"

Recognize that that is Resistance. Resistance is going to tell you that it's all or nothing. Resistance is going to tell you that taking any step that is not THE SOLUTION is wrong.

So, to what are you more committed?

Review your list of brainstorming items. Put a star next to the ones that you most wish would happen. Put a checkmark next to the ones that you notice you are most Resistant to—the ones you believe are most impossible to have happen.

Challenge: start daydreaming about the changes you most wish would happen, working out possibilities like you'd move puzzle pieces around to see where things fit. Notice the Resistance that comes up.

Stop the Job Suckage, Day Five

Whenever I used to go to my coach and complain about my previous job, he would ask me how I could effect some kind of change. I was a college teacher and, for instance, one thing I didn't like was how I would cave in to students because I wanted them to like me. However, I didn't like me when I used rigid, strict control to keep from being manipulated. I blamed the students a lot for why I didn't like my job; I wanted to jump ship and quit.

My coach reminded me that I was in charge of whether I liked my job, and that liking myself/my job was tied closely to integrity, and that it's not a good idea to leave any relationship (personal, friendship, or otherwise) without first "cleaning up your side" and getting fully in integrity.

So today, Day Five, we get into...INTEGRITY.

Integrity is: when your words and actions match, and they are in alignment with your values, beliefs, commitments and life vision.

I was not liking my job because I was out of integrity all over the place. I was complaining rather than doing (words and actions not matching; violation of my life vision—no one has a life vision that involves "complaining a lot"). I was setting up rules and breaking my own rules (more words and actions not matching, breaking commitments). When I was super-strict, I was enforcing rules in ways that were contrary to who I wanted to be in the classroom (contradiction of my values/beliefs).

I could go on, but I think it's obvious—I wanted to blame the students, talk about how awful they could be, blame their parents, blame society, blame budget cuts, blame violent neighborhoods, blame blame blame.

But really? I was in charge of bringing my best to the classroom, and it was really hard to do that when I was a.) out of integrity and b.) topping that with a whopping pile of blame to try and avoid owning my part in all of it.

So, it's time for a tough question: Where in your current job/career are you out of integrity?

Looking at who/what you blame as the cause of unhappiness is an important place to start. There's probably lots of juice there.

And, by the way—kudos to you for being willing to even consider looking at this, because it's tough. Noticing where we're out of integrity is really, really simple (as a step) yet really, really hard (to embrace).

Of all the steps I took, this was the most important. I knew that if I didn't "clean up my side" and get into integrity before leaving that relationship, I'd just bring the same old patterns to my next job. I'd still abuse myself in the same ways, blame others in the same ways, and try not to own my own part.

A funny thing happened when I did get in integrity with myself around the guidelines I was setting up with students—when I clarified the message I wanted to send and then stuck to it, letting go of the worry that I wouldn't be liked—students actually thanked me for being strict. They said things about how it kept them motivated. Even better? The occasional belligerent challenges I'd been subjected to when a student didn't like it if I asked them to turn papers in on time disappeared—in fact, students said things to me when turning in something late, like, "Hey, I know I'm turning this in late, and I'm sorry about that..."

Once the students were no longer the source of blame, my Resistance/Ego/Inner Critic/Fearful Self shifted, and then spent some time blaming the administration, or society, or the curriculum.

And one by one, looking at my part, getting into integrity with me, I slooowly dropped the resentment I had around my job.

This didn't mean that I chose to stay in that job (why, as some of you may have heard...I'm my own Boss Lady/CEO/CFO/VIP at <http://www.yourcourageouslife.com>). I ultimately knew that teaching English was not quite the right line of work for me—and I discovered that when I even took the very powerful step of getting in integrity by totally creating a curriculum that I was excited about (rather than complain about the dull curriculum that I'd thought I was forced to work with) and then realized that at the end of it all, my heart was still called to something different.

Getting in integrity with your job—doing all that you can to bring the qualities you know you want in your life into your job, right here, right now, no waiting, no putting the onus on someone else to “fix it” or change it—this is BIG. It's powerful.

It's not something you do because you want to stay in the same line of work—it's something to undertake because it feels more powerful to live that way. It is THE thing that can shift any job, any relationship.

So—again with this question—what are you more committed to? Resistance, or stopping the Job Suckage, aka, getting into integrity, aka, getting fully into your life?

Stop the Job Suckage, Day Six

Day Six—whew!

You've looked at how to be in integrity (if you skipped the last post, it's really important—pause, read, then come back here).

Now it's time for action. Look at your list of possible solutions from days three and four.

Choose between 3-5 items (challenge yourself to go beyond that, even) and implement them.

Now.

Not tomorrow. Not next week.

Now.

It's Wednesday. You can do this. You don't have to do it perfectly. You don't have to see the effects immediately.

You don't "have to" do anything—you GET to do this. Chances are good that if you are reading this, you are living in one of the lucky countries where changes such as, say, improving communication skills in the workplace or having a more balanced schedule are "luxury problems." I don't say that to guilt you; I say it to encourage you to take advantage of how fortunate you are. Use your power.

Get started.

Tomorrow we'll address: "I'm going along with all of this, but I still don't want to be in this line of work. Now what?"

Stop the Job Suckage: Day Seven

"I'm going along with all of this, but I still know that I don't want to be in this line of work. Now what?"

First, let's start with those of you who may not know what line of work you want to go into, and then we'll get to those of you who know what you want to do and want to take the leap.

Please note that these are both super-involved topics, and I'm going to be aiming for brevity and directness.

If you're not sure what other line of work you'd like to do—talk to your closest friends and ask them what line of work they would imagine you doing, knowing the kind of person that you are. I consider this far more effective than a college career counselor administering an aptitude test. I took those in college and none of them told me what feedback from my friends told me: that I wanted to call the shots, that I wanted to balance between working with people and flying solo, that I had an interest in problem-solving, that I wanted to incorporate creativity, that I get bored with repetitive tasks.

Who knew? Life coaching is a career where I get to "call the shots" by setting my own schedule and working for myself; I work with people one-on-one for their sessions but "fly solo" when I work by studying up on human relationships or working in my home office; it's all about problem-solving (the kind that can actually be solved or reframed); I get to incorporate creativity all of the time through writing or website design or just having a schedule where I have time for that. And trust me, there is nothing boring or repetitive about it.

My friends never said "life coach" when I asked them what they saw me doing. They used the phrases above. Notice that no one suggested I go into sales.

What jobs are you drawn to? I didn't know coaching existed as a career until I happened to read an email about it (passed along to me by a college career counselor). Everything in me said "YES!" when I read that description.

What careers have you heard of, where you thought, "THAT sounds so cool!"

I've worked with coaching clients before who described five seemingly unrelated creative things they wanted to do, and then followed that up with, "But there is no career that has all of that."

Meanwhile, I was listening to that thinking, "Oh, she's talking about becoming a Creative Director."

The client thought the job didn't exist. I knew such a position did exist.

And, as Yvonne Dutra-St.John of the Challenge Day organization (www.challengeday.org) is fond of saying when she describes how she ended up becoming a leader/co-founder/author: "The job for me didn't exist yet. I created it."

Those of you who are uncertain about your next move are in a great place. You get to experiment and try things out. You also get to choose whether you look at that as an unfair burden or as something exciting!

Now, for those of you who already know exactly what you want to do: How can you make that happen for you, part time? Etsy is everyone's favorite for crafty selling.

Worried that you aren't yet experienced enough to do what you want to do? Give it away for free. People tend to worry less about experience when it's free. Worried you don't have enough experience to work as a home organizational consultant in some capacity? Start consulting for free—organize your neighbor's closet, note what you learn, and don't charge a dime. Positive that you can't book photoshoots because you didn't go to school for photography? Do it for free.

Or if you know that it's not possible to implement it part-time, how willing are you to start announcing to family, friends, loved ones that you intend to start _____ by [this date] ?

You have no idea what will come out of the woodwork. You might meet someone tomorrow who can hand you the opportunity to make the switch you want to make. That won't happen if you keep quiet about it.

For every barrier that comes up, choose to take the approach that you will find the time, money, skills, or capability—the solution will present itself. Resistance will tell you that it's got to be all or nothing, that you have to have it all figured out now (or five minutes ago). Resistance will tell you that if you can't quit your job and do exactly what you want full time right now, it's not worth it.

Okay, then—to what are you more committed? Resistance, or something bigger?

Stop the Job Suckage: Day Eight

Day Eight: Collaborate

(Nice how all of that rhymes, huh?)

If you are still considering ideas for a career move, it's time to collaborate. If you know the career you want to go into, it's time to collaborate.

For those of you still considering—ask to interview people who are involved in lines of work that you might possibly be interested in. Ask what they love about what they do and what is a challenge. People like being interviewed, so you might be surprised by how many people are totally into this (also, people like it when you buy them a cup of coffee or send them a Peet's card). Try to get a really real picture of their jobs. Don't back away from asking tough questions.

For those of you who know your line of work—ask to interview people in that line of work, and ask what things they would do differently, or what mistakes they made that they'd do differently, and what they learned. Ask about things like unexpected costs. Ask if they have any job openings where you can intern for awhile. Take a risk.

I once thought that it would be a dream of mine to be a working fine artist. I had some solo shows at cafes and other local places. I learned by doing that it was not something that I ultimately wanted to do. I wish that I had asked more questions of someone in the business, beforehand. In case you're thinking of becoming a fine artist, here's my brief personal run-down:

The Good:

Creativity, art, collaboration, the thrill of seeing your work hung, opening nights, attention, getting messy, people who love your work and tell you so.

The not as good:

Hanging a new show (physically demanding), finding storage space for art, the constant marketing, not making much money on a show given how many hours go into it...which leads to stressing about money.

I learned that I personally preferred to make art in my home rather than do shows. That's just me. Another artist—someone who's more invested and more passionate about art-making—might decide that all of my "not so goods" are worth it to her, and they have the perseverance to surmount those challenges.

Either way, isn't it good to be advised of the challenges before jumping in?

So, who will you be contacting today?

Stop the Job Suckage: Day Nine

Today, mix it up and do the opposite of whatever you've been doing.

If you've been avoiding challenges, hop in there and get caught up. Take action. Go, now—do.

If you've been meeting each challenges, let things marinate. Relax. See what else comes up when you create space around this issue.

And, please do report anything you've noticed as you've come along on this series, in the comments below! I look forward to hearing how it's been going.

Stop the Job Suckage: Day Ten

Wow.

We've arrived at the final day.

You have determined your ideal day, noticed the qualities you'd like to implement in your life, brainstormed solutions, identified resistance, put yourself in integrity, used collaboration.

Tomorrow you'll go to work.

Maybe you are habitually afflicted with "a case of the Mondays." Maybe you tell yourself, "I hate waking up."

Like anything else, that is a choice...

Exercise #1: Whether you are shifting careers or still looking into your next move, make a timeline.

If you're shifting careers entirely, make a timeline for how you will transition out and into what career.

If you're still experimenting with career options, make a timeline that notes all of the people you'll talk to and steps you'll take.

Put timeline dates into your 2010 calendar.

Exercise #2—the "I really do want to shift things litmus test"—share your timeline with someone who you know will gently keep you accountable. Set up a way to check in with them on at least a monthly basis to report your progress. They need not be your ruler...they're just someone who will listen to what you say you're going to do.

Exercise #3—the "There is no doubt in my mind that I don't want to be stuck in a crummy job forever and I will take action rather than procrastinate test"—share your plans with lots of people, via email, via the internet, via the information super highway, and directly ask for their support.

Then, DO IT ANYWAY, regardless of whether or not they give it.

The journey of stopping the Job Suckage may not be over in only ten days. If you want continued support, consider signing up for the first ten weeks of The Courageous Year, where you'll have the option of receiving additional support in making the changes you want to make. I also work with people one-on-one, starting with a free complimentary coaching session, to help you work through the transitional challenges that come with stepping into your dream career. See <http://www.yourcourageouslife.com> for more details.

Finally,

CONGRATULATIONS!

You made it to the end. It is a courageous act just to ask yourself some of these questions and consider the responses that come up.

What's next? You decide. I support you in courageously stepping forward to live 100% fully alive in all areas of your life, including doing what you love as your livelihood.

