

What your “I quit!” fantasy means (and when it's time to walk out in real life)

YOU STRIDE UNANNOUNCED INTO your boss's office—he's on *your* time now. "I quit," you coolly inform him. Crushed, the big man resorts to groveling. "But we won't survive without you!" he cries. You ignore him and walk out a free woman. And then you wake up.

Almost everyone has an eat-my-dust daydream. "People fantasize about quitting all the time," says Pamela L. Perrewé, Ph.D., professor of management at Florida State University's College of Business. Often, thinking about giving notice (or for the truly bitter, *not* giving notice) is a survival strategy—a reminder that work is not a jail sentence but a choice. Perrewé says that many also reassure themselves of their value by envisioning the chaos that would ensue if they left, a kind of "I'll show them" fantasy.

So when should you worry about these thoughts? "If it's *all* you think about, you need to pay attention," Perrewé says. But that may not mean resigning ASAP. "Many people don't try improving their job



situations before they up and quit," says Cincinnati-based career consultant Andrea Kay. As a result, these quitters never learn to negotiate for what they want, and they end up miserable in every job.

Focus on job improvement. Take a month to evaluate the situation before you bail out. "Identify what's most bothering you," says Kay. If it's your workload, for example, propose reasonable fixes: Ask the boss if you can get help for a big project or give up a few smaller responsibilities. Then set a decision date. "If you see no way to improve your situation," Kay says, "start looking for a better fit." —CATHY VALENTI KAUDER

Put down the chain saw: You have options!

QUITTERS! WHAT WOMEN LEARNED FROM WALKING AWAY

Have a backup plan

••• Homesick and unhappy, I quit a librarian job in North Carolina to move home. But no one was hiring here. I even had to cash in my retirement fund to pay bills. I finally landed a part-time job—and learned that it was really stupid of me to leave without having work lined up. •••



—SAMANTHA GUST,
36, BUFFALO, N.Y.

Make time for training

••• I worked for a TV network as a publicist, and when a lead producer quit, I jumped at the job. But my boss didn't consider me for that position. So I left and enrolled in TV production school. Now I executive-produce and host a show that airs in 10 states! •••



—TAMMIE REED, 39,
LAWRENCEVILLE, GA.

Create an opportunity

••• On my third day at a law firm, I realized the job wasn't what they'd said it would be. So I left for lunch and never returned. I'd always wanted to own a company, so I worked part-time and devised a plan. Months later my networking firm for professional women is getting national attention. •••



—HARLEEN KAHLOH,
35, NEW YORK CITY

Beware the comfort zone

••• My coworkers at preschool were like family, but the work itself wasn't challenging anymore. When I gave my two weeks' notice, I cried. But after a year in my new position as director of a child care center, I have really grown as a person. I manage 20 employees and try to be a role model for them. •••



—KERRY KYLE, 26,
ROCKLIN, CALIF.