

# Deciding to Stay or Quit

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Making good decisions involves considering risks, benefits, feasibility, and values, but what if no alternative is clearly better? Have you ever been stuck making a decision to stay with something or move on? Maybe a decision to stay with or leave a job? Or to stick with an existing strategy, vendor, or market? Or stay in a relationship? Or remodel a house? Some decisions are straightforward, but others can seem like a toss-up. Existing circumstances can always be improved, but they're not always bad enough to justify a change.

Some people default to staying with what they have. They choose to make the best of their circumstances. They work for the same employer for many years. They are loyal to their favorite brands. They maintain long-term relationships. They spend time with the same friends. They stay with their technology as long as possible. When they encounter frustrations, they try to work through them rather than give up. They are typically patient, calm, positive, and grateful. They find the good in what they have until it becomes unbearably painful. They are stable, preferring to stay with the status quo than make a change.

Others are quicker to move on. They have a lower tolerance for frustrating circumstances and people. When things don't go as planned, they tend to focus on what is wrong instead of what is right. They complain more often. They are quicker to change jobs, assets, and relationships. They seem to regularly change their mind, hair, glasses, automobiles, pastime, phone, address, or something. They are not as patient. They get bored easily. They have a lower threshold for dealing with adversity.

Which approach is better – sticking with something or moving on? Putting up with circumstances or changing them? The answer of course is “it depends”. There are some circumstances better kept and some better left. You really only know if you made a good decision after a decision is made. Even then you don't know for sure because you make the best of your choice. In addition, few people have the unbiased perspective required to truly assess their own decision.

What do you generally prefer—to stay or quit? When circumstances suggest a change is needed, do you default to staying or going? Do you generally stay with what you have or do you choose change?

While change provides an opportunity for growth, it doesn't guarantee the benefits will outweigh the liabilities. Sticking with current circumstances can be the better option. The green grass on the other side of the fence can turn out to be artificial turf. The new job that seemed so much better instead turned out in just a few months to be just a different version of the same old issues. So, putting up with or improving something can turn out better than giving up on it. Of course, moving on can be the better choice too. When the horse and buggy was being displaced by the automobile, moving into the automobile business was a better choice. Kodak should have been the Instagram. Sears should have been the Amazon.

Perhaps you're frustrated with your current circumstances. Maybe you made a poor decision or unforeseeable events happened outside of your control. It doesn't matter. You are frustrated. You are not productive, advancing, or happy. Or maybe you don't feel valued or respected. You've considered all the variables, yet you still can't decide. Do you stay the course and try to make things better, or do you change course? Or do you wait for someone else to make the decision for you? If you decide to decide, do you follow your instinct? Your feelings? Or do you research the facts and make a logical decision? If people are involved, do you assume they will or won't change? If clients, markets, economies, governments, or competitors are involved, do you assume they will continue on their current trajectory? Or should you pin your hopes on increased funding, new management, competitor miscues, or perhaps better weather? Answers to these questions determine the fate of organizations and lives every day. They cause great companies to become mediocre and mediocre ones to become great. They cause people great joy as well as grief. These are life changing decisions with significant consequences.

To help get the best outcome possible when making a significant decision such as to stay or quit, here are a few points to consider:

# Deciding to Stay or Quit

1. **Employ patience** - Don't quit something important over temporary matters. For example, don't quit your boss when there is a likely chance that he/she will move on. Don't give up on getting your college degree because you had a bad class.
2. **Think long-term** - Ponder the long-term. Something "new" or "different" might provide desperately needed hope, but shiny objects don't stay shiny. Puppies turn into big dogs. New things wear, break, and require effort to maintain too.
3. **Check your pride** - Don't let your pride override your reason. You may feel disrespected, but if it was more a challenge to your ego than genuine harassment, let it go. Don't give up an otherwise good situation to elevate your self-image.
4. **Examine yourself** - If there were a kernel of truth in the feedback given you or you have a responsibility in the circumstance, what might it be? Before making your exit, might an adjustment to how you think, how you act, and/or who you are be good for you?
5. **Upgrade** - Change can be appealing, but be careful about making a change just to change. Hold out for opportunities to move up rather than move over. Don't merely make a lateral transfer out of desperation. If you quit, go to something better.
6. **Research** - Uncover the facts rather than rely on opinions. What does credible data reveal? What do subject-matter experts suggest? What have others in similar situations done and how did it turn out? Are the expected benefits sustained?
7. **Have options** - Identify at least two other viable alternatives before deciding. Rather than simply choose to stay with something or quit it, identify a third option. For example, add "sell", "donate", and "upgrade" to the options "keep" or "trash".
8. **Relax** - Calm down before deciding. Reduce your anger, excitement, cravings, or whatever might be temporarily driving you. Don't make an emotional decision. Press "save" rather than "send" and sleep on it before sending the "I'm done" email.
9. **Evaluate your criteria** - Determine what is most important before deciding. What are your must-haves versus nice-to-haves? Put them in priority order. For work, is it compensation, the commute, or the responsibilities? For a mate, is it their personality, values, or appearance?
10. **Assess the impact on your reputation** - While other's perspectives might not be your top consideration, at least consider the impact of your decision on your reputation. What will happen when your decision is published on social media?
11. **Assess the impact on others** - What is the impact on those who believe in you? Consider the response you'll get from your family, friends, advocates, counselor, or coach. At work, what will your sponsor or mentor think about your decision?
12. **Look at the good** - Consider what is working as much as what isn't. What might you be taking for granted that when absent you will wish you had back? Reliability? Convenience? Honesty and integrity? Challenge? Support? Simplicity?
13. **Assess your dependencies** - Be careful about deciding to depend on people who are close-minded, not willing to take responsibility, or not willing to put in their share of the effort. Or depending on resources, factors, or matters outside of your influence.

Change can be good or bad. You don't know until you make the change. If your decision is essentially a toss-up, don't leave something until you have done what you reasonably can to make it better. Then you can live with the change without regrets. If in contrast you leave something because you are temporarily frustrated, it might be even more frustrating someday if you realize that what you gave up was better than what you had.

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