


What to Do When Frustrated and Stuck

by [Mike Hawkins](#)



**It was going great,
until it wasn't.
Now what?**

Have you ever felt stuck? Been in a [double bind](#) circumstance where there doesn't seem like a good option on how to proceed? Maybe a job that pays really well but is also really frustrating? Or a relationship that provides companionship and occasional joy, but comes with a lot of conflict and irritation? Or you own a house that you love but requires extensive maintenance? Or a thrilling hobby that has become increasingly dangerous? Yes, of course, we all experience that which can be both good and bad. That which is both enjoyable and annoying.

How can so many circumstances be both enjoyable and frustrating? The simple and obvious answer is that nothing is perfect. No relationship, job, home, or pastime is without issue. Nothing is great 100 percent of the time. Thankfully and conversely, rarely is anything terrible 100 percent of the time.

But at what point does something become sufficiently more frustrating than enjoyable? And when it does, how do you decide [when to make a change](#)? If a job, how do you [decide to stay or quit](#)? If a marriage, how do you consider the [consequences and alternatives to divorce](#)? Or how can you experience enough joy to endure the frustrations?

Perhaps the toughest question to answer is if you decide to make a change, what do you change?

A change to consider first, if you're willing, is you. Frustrations can be a wake-up call to reflect and work on yourself. Even if you are not the creator of the frustration, maybe how you receive it needs some work. Or maybe your small contribution to a frustrating circumstance, as small as it might be, is still causing the problem as it is being amplified by others.

Frustration is a valid and healthy emotion. However, whether in us or others, it can be rooted in less healthy areas of our being. For example, it can be caused by pride and insecurity. We might feel disrespected when we think we are more important than others. Or we feel rejected and angry due to being overly sensitive and therefore we [take comments too personally](#).

If for no other reason, working on ourselves can help us avoid landing in the same frustrating circumstance in the future. By the way, in the context of relationships and conflict, when you address any contributions you are making to an issue, you then [make the issue theirs](#). For example, if your frustration involves someone saying you communicate too directly and without understanding, if you start showing empathy, the issue is no longer on you. Once you start showing empathy and sincerely relating to their feelings, thoughts, and circumstances, if they continue to say they don't feel understood, the issue is on them.

After taking responsibility and addressing any contribution you make to your circumstances, what next? Can you then [find peace despite the circumstances](#)? After making any changes in yourself, are the frustrations sufficiently less frustrating to you so that you can accept them? If not, what else should you consider before making a change?

Other considerations might include assessing your expectations. Or what you are grateful for, what drives you, or who you truly are. Or a list of pluses versus minuses. Or a list of the predominate feelings driving you. Perhaps these considerations will give you the confidence and assurance you need to make whatever decision you make.

Consider too that not making a decision is still making a decision. Enduring a circumstance might not seem like a decision, but staying with something is an implicit decision and it can be okay. Staying with something can be the best decision as some frustrations are temporary and worth enduring.

Listed below are ten topics and thought-provoking questions to consider when deciding if a frustrating circumstance justifies a change or if there are sufficient reasons to accept them and be less upset by them:

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1. **Gratitude** - What are you grateful for? Are you taking for granted any benefits that if truly appreciated make the frustrations less in comparison? Can you give equal attention to that which is working as to that which isn't? Are you focusing on the positives as much as the negatives?
2. **Motivators** - What drives you? What is most important to you? Do the benefits related to [the areas that are most important to you](#) outweigh the frustrations? For example, if money or achievement is especially important to you, does the circumstance provide significant financial support or feelings of accomplishment? Or if family is most important, do the circumstances support or inhibit your family values?
3. **Identity** - Who are you? The circumstance might be frustrating, but is it helpful to being your true self or who you want to be? If so, does a change make less sense? Should you [give more attention to who you are or want to be](#) before making any decisions?
4. **Expectations** - When you consider your "must haves" related to the circumstance, are they present or missing? If present, maybe you should stay the course. Alternatively, if they are missing, is there any way to bring them in? Or, might your expectations be too high, particularly when considering that nothing is perfect, especially people?
5. **Emotions** - Does the frustration trigger you to the point that it dysregulates your emotions or causes an ongoing level of unhealthy chronic stress? If so, can you reframe whatever triggers you to be less triggering? Can you reappraise the circumstance to be less emotional? Can you disassociate what is happening now from past triggering events that were especially frustrating?
6. **Learning** - Are you learning, growing, or improving in some meaningful way from the circumstance? Adversity can be a great teacher and character builder. If you are growing, maybe you should endure the frustration, at least until you've gained the knowledge and experience it offers.
7. **Timeframe** - Are you giving too much attention to the short-term? Or the long-term? If you change your time horizon, does it lessen or increase the frustration? If it isn't expected to last long, can you outlast it? Or if it is expected to last a long time, can you ease your frustration by taking it one day at a time or simply not overthinking the long-term?
8. **Regrets** - What decision would make you the proudest to have made five years from now? Or least proud in five years? What decision would have the most impact and matter the most in the future? Would the impact be mostly positive or negative? What decision are you most likely to regret?
9. **Example** - What decision sets the best example for others whom you want to set an example? What would they think about your decision? Your family, friends, coworkers, or others whom you most respect? If you could be an unbiased observer of yourself, what would you think about the decision?
10. **Relief** - Is there anything else in your control you can do increase your joy or mitigate the frustration? Can you set a mental boundary that tells you to disengage when something gets bad enough? Can you take a break to recharge and refresh yourself? What else might be within your control or influence to improve your circumstances?

Hopefully these questions will give you clarity into how to navigate your frustrations and circumstances.

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Article written by [Mike Hawkins](#), award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement. For other articles on reaching your peak potential, visit: www.alpinelink.com/blog.