

Career Changes & Fear – Where Is It Really Coming From?

As humans, we can be sceptical about new things as we assume it can negatively impact our lives. For most of us, change represents different degrees of 'fear'. Fear is a double-edged sword, while it can guarantee our safety, it can also lead to us missing out on wonderful life experiences. This is certainly true when it comes to our work lives.



Throughout my work as a careers professional, for nearly all the clients I have worked with, the topic of 'fear' in its different guises has arisen. This fear has led to them staying in jobs and career paths that provide little satisfaction beyond the pay.

According to my experience, fear can be;

- Fear of the unknown
- Fear of what others will think
- Fear of loss of status
- Fear of loss of income
- Fear of wasted education
- Fear of failure
- Fear of success
- And the list goes on.....

Another area of 'fear' in the careers context is other's 'projecting' their 'fear' onto those who looking to;

- Take a career break
- Change careers

- Engage in further study
- Start their own business
- Create a portfolio career

It is not uncommon for people looking to make career changes, to find those around them (friends, family, colleagues) less supportive than they would have imagined about their career choices. There are certainly many reasons why others do this, however their comments are more often than not based around their own 'fears' which they project onto the person looking to make changes.

For example, a son who is taking a career break, may find his parents 'acting' supportive in some ways, while they also make unsettling comments around the length of time he has been unemployed and the impact it will have on him ever securing another 'good' job. He may also find his friends and colleagues questioning his decision to take a career break for such an extended period of time and what this will do to his career.

The son, while initially feeling reasonably confident about his decision becomes increasingly uncertain. Even though he has a plan behind the career break.

In this case, the parents fear is coming from a place of parental concern about their child. From a desire to protect them. Or, it may come from a fear of what others will say if their son has a lower status career or is unemployed for a lengthy stretch of time.

The comments from friends and colleagues could be coming from their own fears, which they are projecting. It could be their anxiety levels if they did not have secure employment or what others would think if they were not working. Or it could be genuine concern for their friends / colleagues welfare. They could also be coming from a place of jealousy, in that while they are not happy in their career, they don't have the money

or confidence to take a career break and potentially make a career transition.

It is normal to have fears around making major changes in our work lives. What we don't expect when we decide to make changes, is how much the comments of others who doubt and question us, make us question our decisions.

On the topic of career breaks, they are very common these days for all manner of reasons – travel, study, family and a desire to simply take an extended break to recharge. Which makes sense given how hard and long most people work.

When making any changes in your work life be sure to spend some time reflecting and understanding your own fears. Also, be mindful to monitor the comments of those around you – friends, family and colleagues. Don't take on board their 'fears', instead focus on strategies to overcome yours.