



POW: Prisoners of Work

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Prisoners of work are people who have a decent paying job with benefits; the problem is they hate it. Common complaints range from, “My boss is a jerk and my co-workers are mean and self-centered,” to “The organization is trying to accomplish more with less, and the politics and bureaucracy are ridiculous.” When I encounter these people, my heart goes out to them because they typically can’t quit due to financial obligations and dependence on health benefits.

For POW survival, I suggest two options: be proactive, get involved and help improve the organization, or accept how things are and learn how to control your mind so these outside influences do not impact you so severely. POW’s who survive, do so because of their ability to control their mind and focus on a specific future. If you can’t quit your job and find one you like better because you are imprisoned by dependence on pay or benefits, here are suggestions to help you learn how to be in control of your mind and how to view your work situation.

1. Getting involved may be too far outside your comfort zone, or the cultural environment you work in might not allow such insight from the staff. However, you do have 100% control over your mind and how you allow the work-related drama to impact you. Therefore, you can choose to educate yourself about how to re-direct your mind toward more fruitful thoughts so that your mind works for you rather than against you. Successful POW’s realize they are in control of the situation because they are in control of their minds. Someone may control your body, but never your mind, and this helps to separate who you are from what you do. In other words, the gates are open, but due to circumstances, you are simply choosing not to walk through them at this time. Perhaps you can choose to leave later, when the timing meets all of your needs.
2. Now that you’ve made the choice to stay, the next step is to get involved. Getting involved is the precursor to being happy at work. If you choose to stay and help, then commit to it by getting involved. Organize some people, find three possible solutions to a specific problem and present your ideas to leadership. Leadership wants solutions to organizational problems the same as you do; you and your co-workers may have just the solutions that your boss is looking for. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.
3. For years after the end of WWII, POW’s from the Nazi concentration camps had to “re-teach” themselves to be happy. The feeling of happiness is a choice that takes practice and is often the result of achieving other things, such as our objectives or helping our department and company achieve theirs. In other words, people receive a deep sense of accomplishment and self-worth when they achieve goals. This is less about pleasing the boss and more about pleasing yourself. Look to yourself for the answers to the challenges that plague you. Your instincts will guide you, once you start pay attention to what they are telling you.

Sometimes people feel imprisoned, but they usually have more choices than they realize. Taking proactive steps requires you to do things differently than before. Inner happiness is a choice. Work-related happiness comes from accomplishing goals. The choice is yours. You hold the key to unlocking the door to your mind. Slow down and look for it and there you will find your answers.

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