

Trying to Get Rid of You?

By Rose Jonas, Ph.D.

Things don't seem right at the office. How can you tell if they're trying to get rid of you?

When you no longer fit in the organization, the psychological warfare begins. You get named the Director of Special Projects, with a smaller office and no staff. Your boss suddenly micromanages you, second guessing your decisions. You WERE a good performer; now you get bad performance reviews. You find yourself outside the information loop. The intention is for you to buckle under the shame and the social pressure and leave. Most people do.

Why doesn't the company just fire you?

Firing someone can be more complicated and expensive than psychological torture. If you're obviously a good performer but the chemistry's bad, it's harder to fire you. You may be in a protected class: gender, race, age. A severance package could be expensive. Employment insurance would increase when you collect unemployment. Your boss may not have the courage to tell you directly you don't fit anymore. The result is, you go out on your own steam. YOU are often damaged by the experience. The company is not.

Should you wait for the ax to fall, or should you just leave?

It depends on what matters to you. If you just want to get on with your life, you'll leave (although a career coach can help you emerge from this less damaged, maybe even compensated). I've known plenty of people who have said, "If you want me out, you'll have to shove me out." Sometimes they do get fired, but sometimes they last. They might have friends in high places. Their boss never finds the courage. Management changes and they find themselves the Director of Something Important again.

Most people will leave. The emotional costs in this lousy game just are not worth it.