

Get a Buddy **by Rose Jonas, Ph.D.**

This is the Chorus of People Trying to Make a Career Change:

“This is the worst!”

“This is awful!”

“I hate this!”

They show a brave smile to the outside world, but they express to me the enormous difficulty of changing their lives. Nearly everything they have to do in this process takes courage: Call people you don't know. Dig around in your soul. Live in the uncertainty of not-knowing, over a possibly long period of time. Think you should know, but you don't. Tell people how great you are. Ask for favors; ah! it feels like begging. Decide what you want for your life and go for it.

Most of us are not raised to be good at this. We resist. We put it off. We delay. Career changing is as dreadful as doing daily exercise. Yes, it's good for us; but we prefer the pleasure of our warm safety rather than the pain of dragging ourselves up and out. We're not stupid. Our systems tell us it's smart to go for pleasure and to avoid pain, and a lot of this is painful.

So, you sit like a frog on a log on a sunny summer's day. You just don't want to get moving. That makes perfect sense. The trouble is, you need to get moving. Why don't you?

One of the big reasons is there's no one to MAKE you. Think about your life. You have to get up, you have to make the 8:10 AM bus to downtown, you have to pick up the kids from ball practice, you have to do the laundry. There's a lot in there you probably don't want to do, but you have a keen sense of I GOTTA DO THIS and so you do.

With career stuff, however, it can't wait the rest of your life. There's no real pressure. Making yourself happy is a concept you can easily shelve behind your recipe books; it may even feel foreign to you altogether. Delay, then, makes perfect sense.

So, what do you do if you're completely miserable in place, yet you can't seem to get motivated to do anything, and you don't want to hire a career counselor? Get a buddy! Set up an accountability that's external to you, someone to whom you'll make a commitment to get specific tasks done (write the resume, make 5 networking calls), and someone you'll call on a regular basis (every week or two) to make a report of your progress.

This is YOUR responsibility, so do NOTHING to make the other feel like “Wow, I've just taken on another job.” All they have to do is take your call, and give you comments or encouragement, if that will help you. The point is to work outside yourself. If you're training for a marathon, it's easier if you have to meet pals at the track at dawn than if you feel you have a choice about getting out of bed a half hour earlier.

One client asked his sister to be that person after he'd spent a fruitless year trying to work out getting a job in another city. He called her every Sunday night, telling her what he'd gotten done and making a commitment for what he'd do in the next week. He had another job within three months.

Meet a friend for coffee every week. Send an email report to your cousin in Dubuque. Find other friends in similar circumstance and form a loose federation of dream seekers and help each other. Many projects are more easily done when more than one is involved.

Having a buddy can make this work go faster.