

PSYCHOLOGIES

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I have the option of taking voluntary redundancy from my current employer. The package is enough for me to live on for 12 months (paying a mortgage/bills and living expenses). I am tempted because I have been working for my current employer for almost 10 years in a job for which I have no interest in at all. I have recently completed a HND in counselling and although I don't want to be a counsellor in the strictest sense, I do want to do something more worthwhile. I am torn between the security and salary of my current job and the possibility of work which matches my values and interests more - assuming I can find a new job.... Any advice? Thanks

The first thing that comes to mind when I read your letter is how tempting it must be to be able to have the chance to break free from a job you say you have no interest in. However, whilst a year's leaving expenses might sound a lot at the moment, a year passes very quickly and in the current climate it's probably not advisable to 'jump' without a much clearer idea of what you want to do next. That said, I'm a great supporter of people finding fulfilling jobs that really match who they are, rather than who they think they should be. It takes courage to do that and you are fortunate to have the opportunity for some financial support as you take that next step. That said, by focussing on who you are and what you really want you'll help yourself get much clearer about what your next step is.

First things first: know yourself so that you can know better what kind of job you're looking for.

- What are your transferable skills? Are you good with people? Can you manage budgets efficiently?
- What do you enjoy doing....and what do you hate doing?
- Do you like to lead or be lead?
- What are your personal qualities that make *you* worth employing?
- How much time do you really want to spend at work?
- How much money will you need to earn once your redundancy payment runs out? If you don't already do it, try keeping a log of your actual spending at the moment so have a clear view of where your money goes now.

Then develop a vision of your ideal work and type of role:-

- When you decided to study counselling what was it about studying that particular subject that appealed to you most?
- What is about counselling that doesn't appeal to you now?
- Does the institution you studied with have an alumni association or forum where you could contact other ex-students to see how they've used their qualification?
- Check out the job pages of the newspapers and circle the words that stand out for you – not just the roles or titles but the words themselves that describe the role or the qualities they're looking for? Then put them all out on a table and see if you notice any themes that stand out which might suggest a particular direction to explore more.
- Find out where your counselling qualification is valued: working in social care perhaps, or for a charity?

Once you have a clearer sense of your new direction and type of role you can start to plan.

- **Consider a discussion with your current employer to see if there's an option to change role or function so that you have a greater opportunity to use your counselling skills? (Does your employer know you have these skills?)**
- **Could you work on a voluntary basis to test out a new direction and get some new experience on your CV?**
- **Do you need to gain some new skills to go where you want to go? If so, do you need to take account of the costs of any additional training?**
- **Could you go part-time for a while, or be an interim manager or freelance consultant possibly even with your current employer? This might allow you more time to consider your next move and spread your redundancy further.**

There is also some good practical help in the book 'Super Job Search' by Peter K. Studner

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