

Why Are You Still at Work?

"Now that's a silly question," you're probably thinking. "I've got a report due Friday, 200 emails in my inbox, and a manager breathing down my neck-that's why I'm still at work." You may be right. Sometimes you have no choice. You're new, you've got a deadline, or that's just the culture you work in. Sometimes it's the job.

But sometimes it's you.

If you feel like work is gobbling up too much of your life, you'll need to assess the demands of your job. But you'll also want to examine your own habits. Here are three common reasons people find it hard to unhook from the office. Do any of them hit home for you?

You're Too Tired to Take Break

If you're really tired, it's easier to keep riding the momentum of work than to switch to leisure mode. It actually takes mental energy to change gears. That's why interruptions are so draining.

Does it feel easier to keep reading email than to pack up and walk to your car? You're probably in dire need of some R & R. **And if you're this tired, you're probably taking longer to make decisions and get things done.** Another reason you're working longer.

Your fatigue may be clouding your judgment, so you don't see that it is in fact the problem. Your partner or your boss may see it before you do. If so, try to listen to them with an open mind. If your first reaction is irritation at them for getting in your way, they're probably right on target!

You Crave a Sense of Accomplishment

It's not easy to admit, but it's true: some people are happier at work. They enjoy being productive and they miss that feeling when they're at home.

When Ted comes home, his two-year-old, Cathy, comes running up to him. He's thrilled to see her. He gives her a big kiss, throws her in the air, and tickles her a few times. Then he thinks, "Hmm, I better go check my email." He feels restless. Sitting on the floor with Cathy, he doesn't feel like he's doing anything.

But of course he is doing something. **Relationships are made up of those tiny moments and it takes a lot of them to create intimacy.** If Ted rides out that discomfort and hangs out with Cathy a little longer, a year down the road he'll have a much closer relationship with her.

You've Got Problems at Home

Maybe it's not the work that is calling you, but the lure of a safe haven.

Al and Susan haven't been getting along for several months now. Tension in the house is high and arguments come out of nowhere. They explain the same things to each other over

and over-and over-but nothing gets resolved. Something's wrong between Carla and Neil, too, but they're not talking about it. Which means they're talking less in general, and so they feel like they're in a rut. **Unresolved issues are a conversation killer.**

When you're not happy at home, the office can be very seductive. At work, you can make sense of things, feel successful, and get some much-needed acknowledgement. A few more minutes at your desk can turn into a few more hours without you even realizing it.

"Why are you still at work?" is not such a silly question after all. It could be the job. But it could be you. The sooner you figure out the real reason you're still at your computer, the sooner you can be walking in the front door and giving someone a big hug-knowing that you're exactly where you want to be.

© Claire Hatch 2005

Claire Hatch Counseling & Communication
615 Market Street, Suite C Kirkland, WA 98033

www.clairehatch.com. Contact Claire at 425 823-2273 or claire@clairehatch.com

Claire Hatch, LICSW, is a licensed counselor who specializes in turning marriages around. She works with clients in her Seattle area office and by phone around the world. Claire also gives seminars on how to turn conflict to connection, build a strong marriage, and balance family and work. Visit www.clairehatch.com or contact Claire by email at: claire@clairehatch.com.

You are welcome to reproduce this article anywhere as long as you include the information above.