

Still Standing: Finding Your Way Forward in the Midst of a Changing Workplace

A Resource for Those Who Remain

Understanding What You're Experiencing

When organizations restructure or terminate employees, those who remain often carry an unexpected burden. You may have kept your job, but something fundamental has shifted. You're expected to continue performing while processing loss, managing anxiety, and navigating an altered workplace.

This isn't ordinary stress. What you're experiencing has a name: **moral injury** - the psychological and emotional toll of participating in or witnessing actions that violate your core values, even when you had no power to prevent them.

What Am I Feeling?

Check all that apply. There are no wrong answers.

- ☐ Relief that I still have my job
- ☐ Guilt about that relief
- ☐ Grief for colleagues who are gone
- ☐ Anger at how decisions were made or communicated
- ☐ Anxiety that I could be next
- ☐ Exhaustion from managing uncertainty
- ☐ Loss of trust in leadership
- ☐ Conflict between my values and what I'm witnessing
- ☐ Pressure to "be positive" when I don't feel positive
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating or performing at my usual level
- ☐ Feeling like I'm just going through the motions
- ☐ Questioning whether I still belong here

If you checked multiple items, you're experiencing a normal response to an abnormal situation.

Warning Signs You're Beyond Normal Stress

Sometimes what begins as understandable difficulty crosses into something that requires attention. Notice if you're experiencing:

Physical symptoms:

- Persistent headaches, stomach issues, or muscle tension
- Significant changes in sleep patterns
- Fatigue that doesn't improve with rest
- Changes in appetite

Emotional/mental symptoms:

- Numbness or detachment from work you used to care about
- Increased cynicism, irritability, or withdrawal
- Difficulty making even small decisions
- Feeling like you're watching yourself go through the motions
- Intrusive thoughts about work during off-hours
- Sense of dread about going to work

These signs suggest your body and mind are telling you something important. Consider speaking with a mental health professional who can provide personalized support.

You're Not Weak for Struggling

The people who care most about meaningful work, who invest in relationships, who believe work should honor human dignity—they feel this most acutely. Your distress is a sign of intact values, not personal failure or inadequacy.

Taking Stock

What's This Costing Me?

Reflect honestly on how this situation is affecting different areas of your life.

Emotionally:

How has this affected my sense of safety, belonging, or purpose at work?

Professionally:

Am I still growing and contributing at my best, or am I in survival mode?

Personally:

Is this affecting my relationships, health, sleep, or overall well-being outside of work?

Morally:

Does staying here align with my values about work, dignity, and how people should be treated?

What Do I Actually Control?

In situations like these, clarity about control helps reduce overwhelm and focus energy wisely.

I cannot control:

- Organizational decisions about staffing or restructuring
- How leadership communicates or treats people
- Whether more changes are coming
- Others' reactions or anxiety levels
- The broader economic or business factors driving decisions

I can control:

- How I respond to my own anxiety and grief
- Whether I stay in this environment
- How I support colleagues without absorbing their distress as my own
- My boundaries around work hours and emotional investment

- Whether I seek other opportunities
- How I talk to myself about this experience
- The meaning I make of this situation
- What I learn from navigating difficulty

Circle the items above that feel most important for you to focus on right now.

Finding Your Path Forward

Clarity Questions

Answer these questions honestly. There's no need to share your answers with anyone. These are for your own discernment.

1. Is this situation temporary or has it become a pattern?

If terminations and restructuring have happened repeatedly, that's important data about organizational culture.

2. What would need to change for me to feel aligned here again?

Is that change realistic? Within anyone's influence?

3. What am I learning or gaining by staying?

Is it still worth the cost you identified earlier in the Taking Stock section?

4. When I imagine staying here for another year (or three, or five), what do I feel?

- ☐ Relief, hope, possibility
- ☐ Resignation, dread, exhaustion
- ☐ Unclear - I need more time to assess

5. What would leaving require of me?

What practical, financial, or personal factors would I need to address?

6. If a trusted friend described my exact situation to me, what would I tell them?

Sometimes we have wisdom for others that we struggle to apply to ourselves.

If You Decide to Stay (For Now)

Staying can be a valid choice - whether for practical reasons, because you still find meaning in the work, or because you need time to prepare for what's next. Here's how to stay with intention rather than inertia:

Create boundaries:

- Define clear work hours and protect off-time
- Limit how much emotional energy you invest in things you cannot control
- Notice when you're ruminating and consciously redirect

Find meaning where you can:

- Focus on the aspects of work that still align with your values
- Invest in relationships with colleagues who share your perspective
- Remember that you can do good work even in a flawed system

Stay strategic, not stuck:

- Keep your resume current
- Maintain professional networks outside your organization
- Notice whether you're staying by choice or by default
- Give yourself permission to reassess regularly

Recognize this isn't forever:

- You can stay for now without committing to stay indefinitely
- Staying doesn't mean you've failed or given up
- You're allowed to change your mind

If You Decide to Leave

Leaving isn't failure or disloyalty. It's honoring your values and aligning your beliefs with your daily actions.

Reframe the narrative:

- You're not running away; you're moving toward something better
- Leaving is sometimes the most honorable choice available
- Your departure creates space for someone who might thrive in this environment

First practical steps:

- Update your resume and LinkedIn profile
- Identify what you need in your next role (values, culture, stability)
- Reach out to trusted contacts in your network
- Research organizations whose values align with yours
- Create a financial plan if needed to support a transition

Leave with integrity:

- Give appropriate notice when the time comes
- Document your work thoroughly for your successor
- Maintain professionalism even if you feel hurt or angry
- Remember that how you leave shapes what you carry forward

Supporting Others & Moving Forward

Supporting Others Without Losing Yourself

You may feel responsible for supporting anxious colleagues, especially if you're in a leadership role. Here's how to be present without being consumed:

You can care without fixing:

- Listen without trying to solve or minimize
- Acknowledge their experience: "This is really hard" rather than "It'll be okay"
- Resist the urge to explain or defend organizational decisions

Recognize your limits:

- You're not their therapist or their only source of support
- It's okay to say "I don't know" or "I can't fix this"
- Notice when you're absorbing others' anxiety as your own

Set boundaries compassionately:

- "I care about what you're going through, and I need to protect my own capacity right now"
- Limit conversations that spiral into rumination without resolution
- Suggest other resources when appropriate (HR, EAP, professional support)

Maintain your own grounding:

- Don't neglect your own processing in supporting others
- You can't pour from an empty cup
- Taking care of yourself isn't selfish; it's necessary

Resources & Next Steps

One person I can talk to honestly about this experience:

One small step I can take this week toward clarity or change:

If I need additional support, I can reach out to:

- ☐ Employee Assistance Program (EAP) - confidential counseling
- ☐ Therapist or counselor
- ☐ Career coach or advisor
- ☐ Trusted mentor outside my organization
- ☐ Professional network or peer group

When to seek professional support:

Consider reaching out to a mental health professional if:

- Physical or emotional symptoms are significantly affecting your daily life
- You're experiencing persistent hopelessness or depression
- Anxiety is interfering with sleep, relationships, or basic functioning
- You're having difficulty making decisions or seeing options clearly
- You notice yourself withdrawing from people or activities you used to enjoy

Remember

Surviving doesn't mean you must stay indefinitely.

You're allowed to reassess, change your mind, and choose differently.

Your distress is data, not weakness.

It's information about misalignment between your values and your environment.

Loyalty to yourself matters as much as loyalty to an organization.

Perhaps more.

You get to decide what aligns with the person you're becoming.

Work should honor human dignity—including yours.

You are still standing.

That takes strength. Whatever you decide next, you have the capacity to navigate it.

This resource is for informational and reflective purposes. It is not a substitute for professional mental health support, legal advice, or career counseling. If you're experiencing significant distress, please reach out to a qualified professional.