

Dear Counselor

By Suzanne Perlman, LCSW, BCD
www.suzanneperlman.net

203.834.2497



Confidence Crisis

Dear Suzanne: I am a 45-year-old executive who took a severance package from a large corporation after 10 years there. While the decision was mostly mine and I really wanted to leave to explore other ways to use my skills, I am feeling as if I have “been run out of town on a rail” and have a real crisis in self-confidence. How can I get over this? -- Doug

Dear Doug: After devoting 10 years of your loyalty, skills and emotional energy, and after identifying with the corporation as part of your self image, you are bound to have an assortment of feelings about leaving, even if it was your choice. Perhaps the feelings of being run out of town on a rail indicate that you feel rejected, since, if the corporation really valued you, it would have tried harder to keep you.

This can undermine your confidence and sense of being needed and having a role. For men, traditionally, and now more and more for women, what we do is who we are. Corporations also have cultures and personalities with which we identify, and letting go of these ways of life forces a major shift in how we see ourselves.

Try to focus on why you wanted to leave and what your dream is to use your skills in that new way. If you got outplacement services as part of your package, I encourage you to use them. Career counseling is also something to consider.

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