

San Gabriel Valley Tribune

Our fears can lock us into career funk

By Kevin Smith Staff Writer

Saturday, October 30, 2004 - The comfort zone.

It's a place we're all familiar with. But many of us are afraid to leave it to look for a more rewarding job, according to Stacey Mayo, author of "I Can't Believe I Get Paid to Do This."

Mayo, who is also a certified employment coach, said fear of failure in the workplace is more common than most people suspect.

"It's called the comfort zone for a reason," the 47-year-old, Atlanta-area author and entrepreneur explained. "Most people will stay there, even if they are unhappy. Because if you jump off, it brings up that fear of 'What if I don't do well?'"

Mayo's first piece of advice to someone in that predicament is to take a deep breath and consider the options.

"You should stop and take a look at what it is that you want to be different," she said. "Most people get scared at the idea of making a change. In some cases, they don't have a plan of where they want to go. Or maybe somewhere along the line they got the message that something's not possible, or 'You can't make a living doing that.'"

Those kinds of comments only play to the insecurities and fears a person may already have, Mayo said.

"One of the things you need to ask yourself is whether the fear is true, or just a story you made up," she said. "As humans, we're great story-telling machines."

Mayo has compiled a list of the top eight scary thoughts that people tell themselves. The are:

- I will become destitute and end up (homeless).
- People will think I'm crazy for giving up "a great job."
- I'll make a big mistake, and Morley Safer will capture it on 60 minutes.
- I am fooling myself. I'm not really good at this.
- What if no one wants this or agrees with me?
- If I'm successful, I'll lose my privacy and/or friends.
- I'll have to work so hard to be successful, I won't have time for fun and family.