

## The Toxic Job That Nearly Killed Me – And Why It’s Not Worth It

There’s a particular kind of job that looks impressive on paper and lethal in reality. It pays well, comes with a big title, and quietly erodes your physical and mental health until you can’t recognise yourself in the mirror.

I worked in that job.

From the outside, it looked like success. From the inside, it felt like permanent hyper-vigilance. The culture was built on:

- Public shaming as “feedback.”
- 24/7 availability disguised as “commitment.”
- Constant insecurity – people were promoted, sidelined, or discarded with no clear logic.

If you raised concerns, you were “not resilient enough.” If you got sick, you were “letting the team down.” If you hesitated, someone else was ready to step over you.

My body kept the score long before I admitted anything was wrong:

- I stopped sleeping properly; waking at 3 a.m., heart racing, thinking about emails that didn’t exist yet.
- I lived on caffeine and adrenaline, then used alcohol or complete collapse to come down.
- My immune system tanked. Minor illnesses lingered for weeks.

Mentally, the ground shifted too. I became someone who:

- Checked emails before even sitting up in bed.
- Cancelled personal plans because I was “too tired,” then stayed up working anyway.
- Started to believe that there was no life outside this job – that if I left, I’d never find anything “as good.”

The moment that scared me wasn’t a shouting match or a missed promotion. It was a calm, quiet thought one night: *If I keep doing this for another year, something inside me is going to break in a way I can’t fix.* It wasn’t drama. It was a risk assessment.

Leaving felt impossible, then irresponsible, then inevitable.

I had to strip it back to basics: no job is worth your life. No job is worth chronic suicidal thoughts, panic attacks on the way to the office, or needing substances to get through a

normal week. No job is worth making your family and friends watch you slowly disappear.

When I did finally step away, a few things surprised me:

- The world did not end. People who valued me as a person stayed. People who only valued my output vanished.
- My health didn't bounce back overnight, but it did start to move. Sleep improved first. Then energy. Then the ability to feel anything besides dread.
- My skills were transferable. The narrative that "you'll never get a role this good again" turned out to be a control mechanism, not a fact.

A toxic workplace will always try to convince you that:

- You are the problem, not the culture.
- You are lucky to be there, no matter what you endure.
- There is nothing better "out there."

None of that is true. The cost of staying is often invisible until it's dangerously high. If your job is crushing your health, numbing your personality, and making you contemplate things that would horrify the younger version of you, then the real question isn't "Can I afford to leave?" It's "Can I afford to stay?"

You are allowed to choose your life over your job. In the end, it's the only rational choice.