

# Saying good-bye to a friend

## Contribution

I cleared my locker about 18 months ago and into a couple of black garbage bags went all my stuff. I stored them at the back of my wardrobe promising myself I would get around to sorting it out eventually. Yes I had decided to hang up my g-string and see what was going on in the 'outside' world. I was feeling that it was time to move on, I had enough of living a half truth, only a couple of very close friends knew the nature of my job.

It took awhile but I got a job as a switch bitch (answering the phone) and various other office duties in the corporate world. It didn't take long to realise that I had made a mistake in thinking it would be nice to do 9-5 and just to go to work and not have to self promote, wear heaps of make up, maintain my tan, hair colour and all that waxing my other job required. No offence to my co workers in the corporate world, but they were a boring lot. Conversations were nowhere as interesting as in the 'girls' room, and of course I didn't explain my previous occupation as I really didn't think they would understand. I did feel like an outsider most the time and became a clock watcher waiting for the time to go home. After six months I decided to have a big change and I enrolled to study for three years full time. At last I found a place that stimulated my brain and set about opening my mind to a new world. I met the most interesting people and had a real challenge using my brain for the first time since leaving school over thirty years ago (even at school I didn't bother too much I was into having fun!). At times I struggled, big time. However, with the support of my teachers, other students, friends and family I got through the first year of tertiary study and now am looking forward to my second year.

Time for a spring clean, I open my wardrobe and spotted the black bags and decided to sort out the stuff. I couldn't believe firstly how much whore clothing I had accumulated over the years, I counted 24 bra and g-string/french knicker sets and such gorgeous colours ever soooo sexy (not much use for me now, I had gained a lot of weight since sexercise had been eliminated from my life!). My lovely little skirts that just covered my arse, beautiful tops that showed off my fabulous cleavage, the sexy stay up stockings, sensual lingerie made from lace, silk and satin. Oh did the memories flood back as I held up each item. I could remember wearing them and taking them off so many times in a shift! What fun I had dressing up each night for work, to be able to wear such gorgeous clothing and feel so sexy. I was able to

wear clothes that I would never dare wear in public, boy do I miss doing that.

While I was remembering all these times a sadness came over me. I realised that this was good-bye to my secret life, my lovely clients, to the fabulous women I worked with and all the good times I had and the good money I earned. I miss the challenge of each intro, the new experience from each client that I shared my time with. I am forever grateful for opportunity of being a sex worker I have not had another job that empowered me so much and gave me such insight to human nature as this job did.

Good bye Chrissy, thank you for the good times and memories.



Pic: Caption here . . . . .

# Leaving the sex industry

## Contribution

The article below, "Walking Away", was originally written for the newsletter for Hustling to Health, the Friday drop-in program at 10 Inkerman St for (mainly) street sex workers. As such, it speaks to sex workers in the current illegal end of the industry, workers who may feel they have few other skills or who engage in street sex work because they feel they have to rather than perhaps because they want to. The article may therefore seem less relevant to workers in the legal industry who (I hope) are there by choice. I'd also like to note that for most of the time I was a sex worker, the entire industry was illegal – it was only toward the end of my sex-working career that the industry was decriminalised and regulated. Sadly, sex work remains highly stigmatised, just as it was when I was a sex worker, and as a younger woman I bought into that stigma, seeing myself as a lesser human being for not having achieved what I thought I needed to achieve to gain acceptance in the wider community. Now I fully accept that much of what I am and who I am today is a product of my experience as a sex worker, and I am proud of that experience. **I want to strongly emphasise that SEX WORK IS REAL WORK: it is legitimate, it requires skills, and it provides a needed and worthy service to its consumers. It is not something to be ashamed of, to hide, or to pretend about.**

But this was MY experience, an experience in which sex work was intimately linked to drug use, and when my drug use stopped, I needed to move on from sex work too.

### WALKING AWAY

Leaving the sex industry can be a daunting prospect for many sex workers. Sex work may represent an easy buck, or being able to set your own hours and work as much or as little as you want, or something to earn money when you think you have no other marketable skills. It can be daunting to contemplate fitting in with straight hours and people, earning less money than you are used to, maybe losing your health care card and the benefits that come with it. When I wanted to stop being an active sex worker I applied for a job that was still in the industry – after all, I'd been in it for many years, and it was what I knew best. I got a job doing the phones for an escort agency, and found I had really good organisational skills and sales skills, and a good phone manner. Better still, the job was night shift, which suited me fine (I didn't feel at all confident about mixing with straight people and definitely didn't want a 9-5 office-type gig), and was a "legit" business – it enabled me to apply for a credit card which I used rarely, but which established a credit rating. I got a tax file number and started paying tax – all the shit you just have to deal with when you work a straight job. So I managed to increase my sense of self-efficacy (I CAN do other work beside sex work!) and learn a few marketable



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employment skills as well as some essential life skills. From there I got work in a telephone sales job (a call centre) which further increased my sense that I was a capable person and could function in the straight world. I also worked as an office cleaner – yes, you may have to lower your standards for a while – but once again, it provided night shift work, physical activity (which takes your mind off a lot of things and gets the natural endorphins in your brain functioning again), not too much contact with other people (I had a fair bit of social anxiety) and a "legit" income. And more references – whatever you do, you're going to need past employers to give you a good rap, so it pays to be nice, take pride in your work, however crappy it is, and do it as well as you can. I thought of all these jobs as stepping-stones to something better – it helps to develop a positive mental attitude to get you through the boring bits. After a while, I made some serious long term plans: to get some tertiary qualifications so I could do work helping other people who'd had a shit time in their life like me. I had built up my confidence, was prepared to put in a lot of time and effort at studying, and was really focused on a now-definite goal – because it took me a long time to work out what to do with myself. I got a job through a domestic service agency as a housekeeper with a really nice family near where I lived and worked during the day and studied at night. Now I'm nearly there: I'm a registered provisional psychologist, seeing clients at a counselling service and finishing off my last two years of study and work to become a fully registered psychologist. It IS possible! But you have to be realistic in the steps that will get you to your goal, be prepared to put in the hard work and understand that nothing is given to you on a platter – we make our own lives and luck, and the life you want CAN be yours if you have patience, a goal, a plan and a lot of determination.

JKY