

Calling it Quits



- 1 Coined in 2009, the phrase “quiet quitting” means simply: go to work for your contracted hours, do what you’re asked to do, and nothing more. It has come into its own in the past few years, since lockdown, colliding with the Chinese movement *tang ping* (“lying flat”) to become a global phenomenon: go to work, sure, but don’t be striving the whole time. I reject the concept, from a workplace perspective: it merely means doing what you’re contractually required to do. This I would call “work”. Anything more than this is “hustle”. But is there some wisdom in the idea of quiet quitting, applied to other parts of life?
- 2 Friendship is a classic candidate, since you often don’t want an abrupt confrontation, you just want to 26. Instead of seeing each other once a fortnight, you’d be up for something more like a dental schedule: once every six months, infinitely postponable. You don’t want to ghost them, since that almost invites confrontation, but you’d like to radically reduce their expectations of you. The problem is, it’s not really fair. What Annie Duke, author of *Quit: The Power of Knowing When to Walk Away*, says of the workplace - “you have to have the conversation about how your job isn’t aligning with your values, so that your employer can address that” – is also true of intimate relationships. Try to do the kindest thing – this means communicating, not ghosting.

- 3 When it comes to familial relationships, their beauty is also their curse: you didn't choose them. So you won't necessarily be as attuned to the needs of family members as you are to those of your friends, and you will find areas of radical difference – in values, in views, in dress sense – that just wouldn't survive in the rufty-tufted world of people you associate with by choice. At the same time, this makes these relationships extremely durable, and you can ebb and flow in the amount of emotional energy you're willing to put in. Maybe you'll sometimes land in quite a distant relationship, but find later on that the distance has made it more interesting, and now you want to quiet-reapply-for-the-job.
- 4 Of course, we all have the odd rogue relative we would genuinely prefer not to have in our life, and here the management method described by Duke applies: "When you get to the point that you're thinking about quitting, you should have already quit. We tend to walk away too late. There are all sorts of pain points that come in about leaving things, that have to do with having wasted the time and energy that we put into them." But – and Duke wouldn't agree with me here, since she believes in bravery – I think quiet quitting is better than loud quitting in this scenario. Because, realistically, you're going to see your relatives at funerals and whatnot, and you don't want their last memory of you to be you shouting "I quit!".
- 5 You'd think, wouldn't you, that social media would be the easiest of all the quits: nobody on Twitter¹⁾ is relying on your hot take. No one on Instagram will mourn the loss of pictures of your knees on a beach. Why is it, then, that 30 Why are there endless announcements: "Followers, I'm taking August off"; "Disciples, this is the last Facebook post you'll see from me, owing to my new disapproval of Mark Zuckerberg"? It's because we all have a deep-seated fear of our absence going unnoticed. What does that mean for our IRL²⁾ interactions? Could we spin off into the abyss and nobody would notice that, either? No, that's impossible, so noisy-quitting social media is fine too. That is, if you're brave enough to try.

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noot 1 Twitter is tegenwoordig het socialmediaplatform X

noot 2 IRL is een afkorting voor *in real life*