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[Date]

Price of my happiness

How much does my happiness cost? I started working when I was young, and because of that, I learned the value of money and tied my happiness to it. I left home at the height of my arrogance, just turning 18. I was determined to work during the day and go to college at night. Made my own money and knew I could do it.

My first job was at a store in the mall. The owner was a mean person. The store was known as the gateway to the mall, as we started working there because we had to, and then we left when we found a better job. The pay and work environment was terrible, I was happy to have a job, but the pay didn't excite me.

I left the store after two months. I studied Tourism and Hospitality in college and got a job at the biggest hotel chain in town. It was a great opportunity. My salary had practically doubled, including the bonus. I worked in the reservation center, and in less than six months, I had already taken responsibility for groups and large event reservations. It wasn't easy at first, but I loved the hotel. The entire management in my sector was female. Despite the day-to-day disagreements, we had a team that greatly supported each other. Vanessa, my Commercial Manager, and Aline, my supervisor, were incredible people who helped me grow.

After a year and a half of work, one of the chain's three hotels was sold, and the team had to disband. I continued with the old management and changed my workplace. I got a 20% pay raise, but my

tasks have doubled. I was still happy. But with the decrease in revenue, one less hotel, the board of directors decided to cut expenses. They unified the operational and commercial management and dismissed my manager, Vanessa. Two other employees were dismissed, and they outsourced the marketing team and hired an intern to compensate. A group of 5 people became a team of 2.5: Aline - Commercial Supervisor, Isabella - Booking Agent. And Michele - newly hired part-time intern. I was not happy with this situation.

Aline wasn't happy either. We started looking for new opportunities, knowing the situation would only worsen. I realized that I loved the hotel business, but I didn't love the life that the hotel provided me. I was working an average of 54 hours a week; I was supposed to work 44, and I wasn't getting paid overtime. Our overtime could turn into days off, but we could never take days off. We were always so busy. I decided that I wanted to change. I started studying the financial market, got an investment certification, and started applying to work in commercial banks. Aline had a degree in Tourism and started looking for other jobs.

I started at the hotel at the age of 18 in June 2017 and left at the age of 20 in August 2019. Despite the challenges, I was thrilled working at the hotel. I got a job at the most significant commercial Bank in Latin America, and my salary at the Bank tripled, considering my salary at the hotel. I was delighted professionally. After I left the hotel, the sector became disorganized. Aline was increasingly overloaded and ended up leaving without a defined job in January 2020. In February, we had the first case of COVID in Brazil, and in March, the lockdown began.

I was hired at the Bank to work in another city and had to start from scratch. I didn't know anyone, and I had no idea what my routine would be like. I was far from the life I loved, my friends, and my family. Despite everything, I was happy because I was earning well, but my happiness didn't last long. The city I was living in was hot. It flooded when it rained, it was far from everything, and people liked to gossip. I was "the new girl" and soon became the talk of the town. My work team was not kind, my manager was

abusive, and I had no training or support to work. I was pretending to be happy. I was earning well, and I really wanted that job.

I didn't feel welcome in my workplace, and people criticized me for everything I did. They looked me up and down and made me feel insignificant. I had anxiety attacks, shivered and sweated cold, cried daily, ate, and bought things impulsively. The truth was, I was lying to myself that I was happy because my income had increased. From August 2019 to January 2020, I lived the worst months of my life, I always felt loved where I was, and I felt the opposite way there. The truth was, I didn't like them, and they didn't like me. I started asking to change cities, and on February 5, 2020 (my birthday), I received the news that I would return to my city. The team at my new workplace was incredible. They welcomed me, trained me, and made me grow as a person and as a professional. I couldn't see my old friends because of COVID, so my co-workers became my friends for life. My salary hadn't changed, but I was happy again.

I realized I was happy at the hotel because I loved my staff and my managers were kind and wonderful, not because my pay was better than working at the mall. When I returned to my city, I was happy because I felt loved again. I was glad to be working with intelligent and professional people, and I was happy to have made new friends. I could travel with them to the beach, and they were welcomed to my home. My salary hadn't changed, and I was away from my family because of COVID, but I was happy. I realized that my happiness was priceless. There is no better salary than being comfortable at work than feeling loved and respected by the people you see daily.