

I am in my early 30s and I started a great job about a year ago at a start-up company. The challenges in the job are great, but the pay is pitiful, and it's not likely that the pay will get any better in the next three to five years. I love everything about my job but the pay. I just started a meager retirement account, but I'm worried about my financial future. What should I do? — Torn

Image consultant Michelle Sterling answers: I want to congratulate you on following your heart when it comes to your career. Too many people are out there working at jobs they hate but pay well. You made the decision to work at a company you love at a financial risk, so here are some solutions to your predicament: 1. You're still young, so you have a few years to see if the company is profitable, 2. Hopefully the company gave you some stock options and if the company is profitable and goes public, your options will be worth something, or 3. Wait it out at the company and see where it is going, and if it is going nowhere after three years, you may want to consider jumping ship to another firm that will appreciate and value your start-up experience and pay you more. Life is full of trade-offs and for those who take a higher risk up front such as yourself, the reward could be quite beneficial in the long run.

relationships

I've been engaged for about two years now to a great guy who has a 17-year-old daughter and a young son from a previous marriage. The problem is the ex-wife who thinks nothing of dropping the kids off for the weekend with little or no notice. Besides the obvious problem this creates for our relationship, it's exhausting for me. I have a physically demanding job and many nights, I look forward to a relaxing evening at home. And the daughter is following in her mother's inconsiderate footsteps by making demands on my fiancé, which again, impedes our ability to spend time together. My fiancé has difficulty creating boundaries and saying "no" in situations like these, but when I mention these things to him, we end up in a huge fight. The frequency of our fights is increasing and that scares me. I wonder if things will get better once the daughter goes off to college, but I'm not sure. I'm in my

early 30s, I love my fiancé very much and I want a family, but I don't know if I'm really ready for *this* family. Should I hope for the best and stick it out, or cut my losses now and face a lonely future? — The Stepmom

Psychologist Dr. Nita Tewari answers: Tough situation. However, I feel it is important that you are happy in the relationship with your fiancé and family. Communication is key between two partners. If there is a breakdown in communication between you and your fiancé, you may feel alienated, dissatisfied and taken advantage of. I recommend continuing to try and communicate your thoughts and feelings to your fiancé regarding your expectations, his daughter and the increasing number of fights the two of you have been experiencing. If there is little or no change in your communication and understanding of each other's needs, you may have a lonely future ahead of you, even while in the relationship. Pay attention to your intuition and be aware of false hope on your part. ❄

Our Experts

Richard Ching has worked with *Audrey* magazine since its inception. His style sense won him a VH1 video award and has been spotted on *Destiny's Child*, Faith Hill, Wu-Tang Clan and Eminem.



Tina Tang is a jewelry designer who owns two boutiques in New York City. Her designs have been featured often in magazines such as *InStyle*, *Lucky* and *Cosmopolitan*. As an avid shopper, she hopes to spread the joy with her fashion advice.



Margaret Kimura-Heymann is a makeup pioneer, having worked on several magazines and in entertainment. She's also owner of her own makeup school in Southern California, and wrote the book *Asian Beauty*.



Dr. Nita Tewari has a doctorate in Counseling Psychology and is a staff psychologist at the University of California, Irvine Counseling Center and an adjunct faculty in the School of Social Sciences. Tewari is also a member of the Asian American Psychological Association.



Certified image consultant **Michelle T. Sterling** is a principal of Global Image Group, a worldwide image consulting firm dedicated to helping men and women define and refine their image and style through wardrobe, communication and protocol skills.



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