

MEMBER RESOURCE

DECISION-MAKING GUIDES

Should I stay? Should I change roles? Should I see a therapist?

CODE ONE SUPPORT

DECISION-MAKING GUIDES

There are three questions that come up more than almost any other in this work, and most people sit with them alone for far longer than they need to. This is a framework for actually working through them – not a push toward any particular answer.

SHOULD I STAY IN THIS JOB?

This question usually doesn't arrive as a clean decision. It shows up as a gradual erosion – less enthusiasm, more dread, a sense that something's shifted and you're not sure when. Before treating it as a decision about the job itself, it's worth separating out what's actually driving the question.

- Is this fatigue that would resolve with genuine recovery, or a deeper shift in how you feel about the work itself?
- Is it the job, or is it a specific team, roster, or organisational issue that might change with a transfer rather than an exit?
- If you removed the current source of frustration entirely, would you still want to be doing this in five years?
- Are you making this decision from a rested, clear state – or from the middle of burnout, where almost everything looks like it needs to change?

This isn't a question to answer in the middle of your worst month. If you're genuinely burned out, address that first – the job might look completely different once you're not running on empty. If the flatness persists even once you've properly recovered, that's more meaningful information.

SHOULD I CHANGE ROLES?

Sometimes the answer to "should I stay" isn't yes or no – it's "not like this." Changing roles, specialisations, or units is a legitimate middle path that gets underused, often because leaving a role can feel like failure rather than what it usually is: a reasonable adjustment.

- Is your current strain tied to the core work itself, or to a specific role, roster, or environment within it?
- Is there a specialisation, unit, or shift pattern that would keep you in the work you value while changing the part that's costing you the most?
- What would you actually lose by moving – seniority, identity, relationships with your current crew – and how much does that weigh against staying somewhere that's not working?

A lateral move isn't a downgrade. Plenty of long careers in this work include at least one deliberate change of role once someone recognised what was and wasn't sustainable for them specifically.

SHOULD I SEE A THERAPIST?

This is often the hardest of the three to act on, not because the answer is unclear but because asking it can feel like admitting something. It doesn't need to.

- Have symptoms – sleep, mood, intrusive thoughts, relationship strain – persisted for more than a few weeks despite your own efforts?
- Has someone close to you said they're worried, even if you brushed it off?
- Are you using alcohol or anything else to manage how you're feeling more than you used to?
- Is there a specific incident or pattern you've tried to work through on your own without it actually shifting?

You don't need to be in crisis to see a professional, and you don't need the full story ready before you make the call. "I've had a hard run of jobs and I want to talk to someone before it catches up with me" is a completely legitimate reason to book an appointment – it doesn't need to be worse than that first.

A NOTE ON MAKING THESE DECISIONS WELL

All three of these questions get harder to answer accurately when you're exhausted, and easier to answer honestly once you're not. Where you can, address acute burnout or unprocessed critical incidents first — through rest, peer support, or the other resources in this library — before making a big structural decision from inside that state.

That doesn't mean wait forever. It means noticing whether the urgency you're feeling is about the actual decision, or about how depleted you currently are. Both are real. They're just not the same problem, and they don't have the same fix.

WHAT ACTUALLY HELPS

Talk it through with someone who isn't inside the decision with you. A peer who's faced a similar question — whether they stayed, left, or moved roles — will usually give you a more useful sounding board than someone who's never had to weigh it.

Write down what's actually true, separate from how you feel today. Feelings about the job fluctuate week to week. Facts about your role, your options, and your circumstances are more stable ground to make a real decision from.

Give yourself permission for the answer to be "not yet." None of these questions require an immediate, permanent answer. "I'm not deciding this today, but I'm going to actually look into it" is a legitimate answer that moves things forward without forcing a decision you're not ready to make.

WORTH SITTING WITH

Which of the three questions above are you actually sitting with right now?

Are you trying to answer it from a rested state, or from the middle of a hard stretch?

What's one small, low-stakes step you could take this week that doesn't require the full decision yet?

IF THIS IS URGENT RIGHT NOW

This resource isn't a crisis tool. If you're having thoughts of suicide, of not wanting to be here, or of harming yourself — stop reading and reach out now:

AU: Lifeline 13 11 14 **US:** 988 **UK:** Samaritans 116 123 **CA:** 1-833-456-4566

This resource will still be here when you're ready.

Rick — Founder, Code One Support

Firefighter · Former Infantry · Trauma & Grief Peer Support

MORE FROM CODE ONE SUPPORT

If this helped, here's where to go next.

MEMBERSHIP

CODE ONE PEER SUPPORT

Real conversations with a trained peer who's lived this job. Not a crisis line, not corporate wellness – ongoing support, on your terms. Plans from AU\$29/month.

SELF-GUIDED WORKBOOK – \$27

THE CODE ONE DEBRIEF

A structured post-incident recovery workbook. Seven sections. Private, practical, yours to keep.

FREE – WEEKLY EMAIL

THE HANDOVER

One practical mental health tool every week, written for first responders and their families.

FREE DOWNLOADS

THE 3-MINUTE RESET, AFTER THE JOB, LIVING WITH THE JOB

Quick regulation tools, a guide for volunteers, and a guide for partners and families.

TikTok & Instagram: @codeonesupport · codeonesupport.com · info@codeonesupport.com

This resource is for informational and educational purposes only and does not replace professional mental health support. If you are in crisis, contact your local 24/7 crisis service.

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