

GuidanceResources[®] Online

Managing Job Loss Stress

When you hear you will be losing your job, it is natural to experience a wide range of emotions. These feelings are normal when confronted with any loss one may experience because it means letting go of something that is very important to you. The following are some guidelines to help you cope during the weeks ahead.

- [Immediate](#)
- [Ongoing](#)

Immediate

- Do not panic. It is likely that your initial reaction to the announcement was shock, even though you may have suspected it was coming. You may have trouble concentrating, and you may feel a little anxious. You may be angry or sad.
- Give yourself time to think about your situation. Sometimes we react emotionally and say or do things that we later regret. You may be hurt, but do not let those emotions elicit negative actions. Instead, take a "timeout." It works for the pros on the ball field, and it can work for you. Give yourself time to plan your strategy and you will come out ahead.
- Do not lose control. Chances are you may be having all kinds of feelings, ranging from shock to anger to relief. Try to label your feelings. You will probably be able to handle this because you have managed major changes in the past. If you feel you might lose control of yourself and do something to harm yourself or others, seek help and talk to someone.
- Prepare to talk to your spouse or partner. Be ready to answer his or her questions, such as: Why will you or did you lose your job? How will savings and pensions be distributed? In a lump sum? Over several weeks? How long will your medical coverage continue? What about life insurance? What kind of support will you get to help you find a new job? What other resources will be provided during the coming weeks and months?

Ongoing

- Take care of yourself. Drive carefully. Resist the temptation to take out your feelings while behind the wheel. If you need to pull over and take a "timeout," do it.
- Talk to your family. As difficult as it might be, let your spouse or partner know what is going on. Recall your first reaction and remember how you felt. Your partner probably feels the same way. He or she may feel anger, shock or even betrayal. Be supportive. Also, allow yourself to ask for their support. Telling your family about any additional support you may receive from your employer during the transition (financial and outplacement) will help.
- Take a break, especially if a weekend is approaching. Get something accomplished around the house. Get the small projects out of the way. Accomplish short-term goals. You will feel better having done it.
- Be sensitive to your stress levels. If you feel particularly stressed, take a walk or do something to relieve your tension. Moderate exercise can help you manage stress. Try to cut down on caffeine and alcohol. They can add to your stress level and anxiety.
- Do not rush out and tell everyone you need a job. Wait until you are prepared and are clear about your objectives and how others can help. Otherwise, without an effective strategy you may waste time and resources.
- Be cautious about thinking you can change the past. Prepare to move forward. The fact is that soon you will no longer work for this company. You will work for yourself instead. You need to prepare yourself to get a new job.
- Stay involved. Continue to be involved with friends. Do not put everything off until life settles down. It is okay to have fun while in transition. Go to the party. Plant that tree. Enjoy a good movie. Your children can join the ball team and continue piano lessons. Taking a job search seriously does not mean being serious all the time.
- Realize there will be ups and downs. Rainy days, flat tires and late mail deliveries may take on undue significance. Keep your perspective on what is really important.
- Do not overreact. While this may not be the time to buy a new boat, it is also not the time to ration toothpaste, cancel cable or pull your child out of daycare.

- Practice moving forward. While it may not be helpful news at this moment, employees do get new and often better positions, no matter what the industry, stock market or fortune tellers say about the employment outlook. Spending your energy on moving ahead pays off.
- Avoid blaming everything that goes wrong on the job loss. Blame does not fix problems. Remember, kids whose parents have not lost their jobs also are getting into trouble at school. Faucets leak in other households. Couples disagree in the best of times.
- Share your thoughts with your spouse or partner and your family. Protecting your family members from what you consider bad news is not the answer. Inform them of your situation and help them know that you are moving forward and that you need their support. Include your children in this process. It will ease their fears and they can learn from your example.
- Recharge yourself. You do not have opportunities to accomplish things at the worksite right now, so find other ways to recharge. Listen to music, visit a friend, teach a church or community class or read a book. You still have a lot to offer.
- Work diligently on your new job-search strategy. You will be able to reposition yourself.

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