

Coping with a Layoff



The current economic situation in our country has had an effect on many people. Many companies have been forced to close their doors, make pay cuts, decrease their spending, or lay off some of their employees. As a result, many people are suddenly finding themselves without a job.

Even if you haven't been let go from your job, you still may be affected by a layoff. You may be nervous about what your future holds during a time of uncertainty and organizational change. Your job may have changed due to other people being laid off. You may have a partner, family member, or friend whose been laid off. Or, you may feel guilty that you still have a job while others lost theirs.

No matter what your situation, here are some ways to help ease the transition if a layoff happens to you or someone you know.

- **Accept what you can't change.** Although getting let go from your job can be a stressful situation, it's unfortunately not always one you can control. What you can control, however, is how you choose to respond to the situation. Having a positive outlook can be much more productive than letting yourself get down.
- **View it as an opportunity.** If you'll be out of work for awhile, consider all the things you haven't been able to do because you didn't have the time. Try to look at the extra time as a reward and use it to your advantage. You just may find yourself turning a tough time into an opportunity for growth and change.
- **Don't take it personally.** If you were laid off because of financial reasons, don't let your thoughts take over with other possible reasons for the layoff. Thinking things like "I guess I wasn't valuable enough of an employee" will only make you feel worse. Be realistic about your situation.
- **Make the most of your time.** Finding a new job can take some time – especially when so many companies are trying to cut costs. Take some time to update your resume, do your research, and improve your skills. Use the extra time you have to make yourself more marketable.
- **Maintain your routines as much as possible.** Keeping family routines such as youth activities, school expectations, family rules, leisure and sports, can give the family a sense of stability and can reassure children. It can also help your family to stay strong. In some cases, however, you might have to find lower cost options.
- **Come up with a plan.** Losing your job can put a strain on your finances. It's important to come up with a plan as to how you're going to handle the decrease in income. Will you look for a new job right away? Will you have to use savings or credit to pay your bills? Will you have to make some changes to your budget? Where can you cut back on your spending? It's best to take a realistic look at your financial situation and have a plan in place *before* problems arise.

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- **Take care of yourself.** It's especially important to take care of yourself during stressful times so your stress doesn't take a physical toll on your health. Make sure you're eating right, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and avoiding alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.
- **Be grateful for what you have.** It's easy to forget what's really important during stressful situations. Take some time to reflect on the things that are good in your life. You may want to try keeping a "gratitude journal" by writing down three or four things you are thankful for each day, and take a few moments to reflect on what you've written.
- **Don't neglect your relationships.** It can be difficult to focus on your relationships when you have other things on your mind. But spending time with family and friends can boost your mood and can help take your mind off things for a little while.

If someone you know has been laid off, let them know that you are there for them. Consider that they may have less money for entertainment, and try coming up with ways you can spend time together without spending money.

- **Express your feelings.** You may be experiencing many different feelings about being laid off. For example, you may be stressed, angry, confused, scared, or sad. These feelings are normal. Talking about what happened can help you to start to come to terms with your job loss. It's important to remember that experiencing stress due to your job loss is normal.
- **Use any help available.** Some companies may provide services for people whose jobs are being eliminated. This may include providing help with developing or updating a resume, information about further education, assistance in securing a new job, or support groups or seminars.
- **Take advantage of your contacts.** Quickly begin to network with colleagues and friends to get job tips. Follow up on job recommendations quickly and keep track of every lead offered.
- **Keep your options open.** Explore opportunities for different types of work, consider a training program, or volunteer in an area you're interested in. Concentrate on gaining as many skills as possible, and then use this information to build your resume.

Being laid off from a job can be very stressful. It often means a change you didn't plan for, added financial strain, and uncertainty about the future. But with a little planning and positive thinking, you can focus your efforts on the next chapter of your life. And remember, sometimes when one door closes, another one opens.

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