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HOW TO DEAL WITH STRESS DURING UNEMPLOYMENT

By: Interns Over 40

It's normal to feel hurt, vulnerable, or angry after losing a job. The good news is that despite the stress of job loss and unemployment, there are many things you can do to take control of the situation and maintain your spirits.

You can get through this tough time by taking care of yourself, reaching out to others, and focusing on your goals. Losing your job can also be an opportunity to take stock of your life, rethink your career goals, and rediscover what truly makes you happy

Losing a job is stressful

Our jobs are much more than just the way we make a living. They influence how we see ourselves, as well as the way others see us. Our jobs give us structure, purpose, and meaning. That's why job loss and unemployment is one of the most stressful things you can experience.

Beyond the loss of income, losing a job also comes with other major losses, some of which may be even more difficult to face:

- Loss of your professional identity
- Loss of self-esteem and self-confidence
- Loss of your daily routine
- Loss of purposeful activity
- Loss of your work-based social network
- Loss of your sense of security

Grief is normal after losing a job

Grief is a natural response to loss, and that includes the loss of a job. Losing your job takes forces you to make rapid changes. You may feel angry, hurt, panicked, rejected, and scared. What you need to know is that these emotions are normal. You have every right to be upset, so accept your feelings and go easy on yourself.

Also remember that many, if not most, successful people have experienced major failures in their careers. But they've turned those failures around by picking themselves up, learning from the experience, and trying again. When bad things happen to you— or going through unemployment—you can grow stronger and more resilient in the process of overcoming them.

www.gsr4you.com

Sales: 233 S. Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606 312.922.6664

Administrative: 13368 W. Heiden Circle, Lake Bluff, IL 60044 847.735.0525 Fax: 847.735.1205



Coping with job loss and unemployment stress tip 1: Face your feelings

Fear, depression, and anxiety will make it harder to get back on the job market, so it's important to actively deal with your feelings and find healthy ways to grieve. Acknowledging your feelings and challenging your negative thoughts will help you deal with the loss and move on.

Surviving the emotional roller coaster of unemployment and job loss

- Write about your feelings. Express everything you feel about being laid off or unemployed, including things you wish you had said (or hadn't said) to your former boss. This is especially cathartic if your layoff or termination was handled in an insensitive way.
- Accept reality. While it's important to acknowledge how difficult job loss and unemployment can be, it's equally important to avoid wallowing. Rather than dwelling on your job loss—how unfair it is; how poorly it was handled; things you could have done to prevent it; how much better life would be if it hadn't happened—try to accept the situation. The sooner you do, the sooner you can get on with the next phase in your life.
- Don't beat yourself up. It's easy to start criticizing or blaming yourself when you've lost your job and are unemployed. But it's important to avoid putting yourself down. You'll need your self-confidence intact as you're looking for a new job. Challenge every negative thought that goes through your head. If you start to think, "I'm a loser," write down evidence to the contrary ("I lost my job because of the recession, not because I was bad at my job.").
- Look for the silver lining. Losing a job is easier to accept if you can find the lesson in your loss. What can you learn from the experience? Maybe your job loss and unemployment has given you a chance to reflect on what you want out of life and rethink your career priorities. Maybe it's made you stronger. If you look, you're sure to find something of value.

Beware of Pitfalls

- Taking refuge in your "cave" may provide temporary comfort, but is little help if your time spent there is not constructive. Surrounding yourself with positive, supportive family and friends may better help your self-esteem.
- Venting your anger and frustrations may only make you feel worse if you find yourself in the middle of a "pity party." There are people who actually enjoy misery and the misfortune of others.
- Drinking is at best a temporary relief, and for some people, can lead to a crippling addiction.