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Coping with the Emotional Impact of Losing Your Job

We can help with the new phase in your life!



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Coping with the Emotional Impact of Losing Your Job

Job loss can cause stress

Losing your job can exact an emotional toll on you and your family. Recognizing these emotions and dealing with them positively can go a long way toward helping you and your family cope with the stress that often follows a job loss.

Emotional reaction

Your immediate reaction to losing your job, especially if it's unexpected, might be shock and dismay. You might wonder how this could be happening to you, and think it must be a mistake. It is common to experience feelings of anger, blame, grief, shame, and even depression.

You also may begin feeling a sense of loss: loss of self-respect, loss of the respect of others, loss of identity, loss of security and daily structure, and a loss of the relationships you enjoyed with coworkers.

After a period of time, feelings of grief may set in. You may find that you have no energy or ambition, especially with the task of finding another job. How you respond to these feelings can affect not only you, but also the people around you.

For example, your lack of energy and inability to focus may carry over to other responsibilities, such as your obligations as a parent or spouse. You may fear that your family views you as a failure, which may cause you to shrink from parental or spousal duties.

Often, a job loss means that family members' roles and tasks may change. For instance, you may try to help out by doing chores that your spouse or children had done. Other family members may look for employment which may mean less time together as a family. A spouse may start a new job or try to pick up more hours at a current position. It's often difficult, though, to adjust to these new lifestyle changes. In addition, the emotional stress of coping with a job loss, and the general anxiety created by change can sometimes lead to increased family squabbles and bickering. Here are some suggestions that may help you and your family deal with the emotional impact caused by job loss.

Don't panic

Give yourself time to think about the situation. Don't do something as the result of an emotional reaction that you might regret later. Think positively. You can find another job. You have talents that are desirable and useful and you don't necessarily have to jump at the first opportunity that comes along.

View your situation as just another challenge. What had been your former work day is now a day you'll spend looking for work. Consider this time as an opportunity to reassess what you'd like to do as opposed to a job you have to do.

Understand that you're not alone

Especially during tough economic times, many people face job loss every day. You shouldn't be ashamed to admit you may have been a victim to company downsizing or a poor economy. You'll probably be surprised to find many people who have had similar experiences.

Consider the support of others

Often, it can be helpful to talk with people who are in the same situation as you. By sharing your emotions and concerns, you may learn how to better deal with them and help others in the process.

Recognize your feelings and those of your family members

If you're feeling angry, frustrated, or even depressed, don't try to hide those feelings. And be mindful that stressful situations affect everyone. Address your feelings with your family and discuss their concerns. As important as it is to express yourself, it's equally helpful to listen to others and try to understand their reactions.

Financial concerns add to the stress of job loss

Additional sources of stress associated with job loss include financial concerns and the possibility of relocating. Often, losing the income your job provided forces you and your family to adjust your spending and lifestyle. Sometimes the spending constraints are short-term and include relatively minor adjustments such as eating out less frequently, downscaling or even canceling a planned vacation, or putting off a new car purchase. However, as the jobless period grows longer, the loss of income may force you to forgo more important expenditures such as college funding or retirement savings.

Of potentially greater concern to your children is the possible need to relocate for a new job. Your children may resent the fact that they have to leave their school and friends. The comfort and routine that is being disrupted may affect your relationship with your children as well as their interactions with teachers and other children. Until you're able to land that new job, consider these ideas to help you deal with the financial strain that may result from your unemployment.

Take stock of your finances

Before you spend all of your time trying to find another job, spend some time assessing your financial situation. Addressing any financial issues at the outset may help alleviate some of the stress associated with job loss.

Start with a budget

Establish a budget for meeting your immediate and most important expenses such as food, clothing, utilities, housing costs, etc. Try not to accrue more debt. It's better to cut expenses first before relying on your credit cards.

Apply for unemployment benefits

Apply for unemployment compensation benefits if you're eligible, even if you don't expect to be out of work for long. If you're lucky enough to receive a severance package, it can help tide you over to your next job. And don't forget about unused benefits from your former employer such as unpaid sick or vacation time and personal days. Also, take stock of your available savings to supplement other sources of income.

Be sure you have continuous health coverage

If your group health insurance ends when your job does, you may be able to continue your coverage if you qualify for COBRA or a similar state-sponsored program. Also, check if you're eligible for coverage under your spouse's group plan.

It may not be easy, but you can do it

Make a plan and follow through with it. Try to make each day productive. That doesn't mean you need to schedule five interviews each day; rather, do something that is proactive. For instance, set up a daily schedule that might include working on your resume, making phone calls, researching jobs, and exploring educational or training opportunities. In addition, be good to yourself. Try to eat well, exercise, and do something enjoyable like watch a movie or play catch with your child. Finally, focus on your accomplishments and not the fact that you're currently out of work. Try to anticipate a future filled with more achievements than letdowns, and don't hesitate to seek professional help to cope with the stress you're feeling.



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