

The Counseling Team International (TCTI)

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The Impact of Being Laid Off

Challenge & Opportunity

No process will eliminate the negatives of someone's losing a job and the economic threat that is presented; however we hope to assist in making this process easier and more manageable for you and your loved ones.

People Who Are Laid Off Share Common Feelings

You may share some or all of these feelings. There is no specific order.

Shock: Even if we know in advance we will be laid off when it happens we are in shock!

It is very difficult to accept the reality due to the sudden, unexpected nature of being laid off. Part of being in shock involves numbing and denial which are very normal ways we protect ourselves emotionally.

Confusion: "Why me? Did I not perform well enough? How did they pick the ones who were let go?"

It is not uncommon to blame yourself in some way. One common way is to feel guilty. Many people feel guilty about things they did or things they failed to do. This is very normal. Express your guilt feelings, and know you will move beyond them.

Anger: "Who do they think they are upsetting my family and my life this way?"

It is very normal to feel anger, protesting the loss of your job. Because the loss of your job was sudden, untimely and pointless, this anger can be intense. Since it is the anger of frustration, it is usually misdirected. But the anger is a normal response. Acknowledge it, accept that it is normal, talk it out with a caring "listener." Or express it in non-destructive ways (hit a pillow, smash something useless, get off to yourself and yell and scream). As your hurt heals, your anger will go away.

Depression: You may feel exhausted or mentally drained. You may find it difficult to concentrate or to think clearly. This is normal. Proper rest, good nutrition and exercise will help. And begin to take small steps to get involved in life again. List some things you would like to do. Set some new goals, take one thing at a time.

Loss of identity and Social Contacts: When workers are displaced, there is a tendency to feel as though their social trust has been violated and thus these individuals are less likely to be socially engaged. As a result, people who have been laid off fail to participate in community events and neighborhood functions. Finally, many individuals feel as if they are not only losing their jobs, but also their friends from work.

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Self-worth: The act of losing your job may be interpreted as a sign of personal inadequacy and this type of self-blame may affect your self-esteem. Also social evaluations by others and social comparisons are particularly influential and a reduction in self-esteem can be viewed as reasonable following a job-loss.

Economic Loss: It is important that you remember any severance packages, unemployment compensation, health insurance and other financial arrangements that you will have access to once you have left your job.

Informing Your Partner and Family: Telling your partner and family about the loss of your job may cause fear and anxiety. One way to explain to children about a change in finances is to inform them that gifts will be limited, but you will be able to spend more quality time playing homemade games with them. You may also consider this time an opportunity to reconnect with your partner and family.

Hope: Hope will come again. Gradually the pain and anger will subside and you will begin to discover more and more “acceptance” that allows you to focus on the future. Life will be good again.

Ways to Cope: Social support and high levels of activity during unemployment may to some extent offset the loss of social relationships, goals, and time structure that may have been provided by your job. Make sure you take care of yourself. Eat right, get enough sleep, drink plenty of water and engage in regular physical activity. Ensure you have a healthy body through activities like yoga or boxing, taking a short walk, going to the gym or playing sports that will enhance both your physical and mental health.

“How Can I Know If I Need Help, Or Professional Assistance?”

Occasionally, some may find that the loss just too great to cope with. Sometimes the hurt, pain, and anger are so great that we get bogged down. When this happens, we may need professional assistance to get going again. How do we know when we need this? What are the indicators we see in ourselves or our co-workers that say help is needed?

- Headaches, muscle tension, neck or back pain
- Chest pains, rapid heartbeat
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite or overeating “comfort foods”
- Lack of concentration or focus
- Memory problems or forgetfulness
- Jitters
- Irritability
- Short temper
- Anxiety

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