

NSLAP WELLNESS TIP: How to deal with job loss

The following is an article excerpt from Homewood Human Solutions™, your health and wellness provider.

After job loss or significant job change, many of us expect ourselves to carry on as if nothing traumatic has happened. However, if left unresolved, distressful feelings of loss can harm your health and your relationships.

Here are some tips to help cope with the emotional effects of job loss and help you begin to focus on the future.

Take time to grieve

If you've just been informed of your job loss, don't vent on the spot. Go home, relax, and collect your thoughts. Now is the time for you to begin grieving. Much like losing a loved one, you might feel shock and disbelief at first, this will be followed by some period of sadness and perhaps depression (because you feel that the situation is hopeless). Later still, you may feel angry (at the workplace, at your boss, at yourself).

If you allow yourself to experience these feelings and collect your thoughts without taking drastic action, you will grow to accept what has happened and begin to plan for the future.

Talk to others

Your family and friends can be an important source of support for you. By talking with supportive others, you will work through your feelings and thoughts. As well, other people may have some ideas and a new perspective for you, as well as reassure you that you will be okay. Talking to family is particularly important because they need to know what is happening, what they can do to help and what they can explain to friends and concerned others.

Take care of yourself

Keep active by walking, running, going to the gym, etc.. This will help you release tension. Taking care of yourself also means taking care of your inner self. Treat yourself well by challenging yourself to think positively about your abilities, strengths, talents and accomplishments. Don't let the loss of your job diminish your sense of worth.

One helpful activity during this period of transition is journalizing. Write down your thoughts about job loss and your struggle to find new work in a daily journal. This will help you get a better perspective on the situation, and it may even help you secure new employment faster. How is this possible? The Harvard Business School found that unemployed people who wrote in a journal each day while looking for work resolved their anger and resentment and depression much faster than those who did not write in a journal, and as a result were more appealing to potential employers.

Bridge the gap

There is a period of transition from when you lose your job to when you find new employment. What are you going to do to bridge this gap emotionally? With your time? With finances? These are important questions to answer.

Structure daily activities much like you are still working. Get up at a regular time, begin your job search, take specific break periods and 'quit' at 5:00pm to go home.

Seek the advice of a financial counsellor, manage your debt, cut back on expenses (include your family in these decisions) and perhaps pay yourself in regular installments if you have received a lump sum on exiting your previous employer (much like a continued paycheque).

Question the company

Seek answers to these questions:

- Will your previous employer help you find new work?
- Will they let you use their resources (telephone, fax, secretary, etc.) to look for new work?
- Do you have continued health benefits for a certain period?
- Is there a lump sum payout?
- Do you have a written copy of their reasons for terminating your employment?
- Do you have a copy of your personnel records (to show to new employers)?

The silver lining

In the end, some people find that losing their job is a welcome event--a turning point in life. This is not to say that the experience is a happy one or an easy one. Rather, this is an opportunity to force yourself to take a look at where you have been spending your time and energy and decide whether you want to continue on the same career path or change direction. Ask yourself:

- Are you happy with the work that you have been doing?
- Do you want to make changes?
- Have you been climbing a career ladder without looking at where it is leading?

Now is your opportunity to reflect upon your career choices, as well as the opportunity to steer yourself in a different direction if you so desire - therein you'll find the silver lining.

*For additional information, support, resources and counseling on health and wellness, visit the NSLAP website at www.nslap.ca. Please note that **NSLAP** is your "company" name when you register. When you call the NSLAP number at **1-866-299-1299**, (Français: 1-866-398-9505; TTY: 1-888-384-1152) Your call will be answered any time, day or night, 365 days per year.*