Coping with a Layoff

Employees often react to being laid off with variations of the well-known stages of grief and loss: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. After a layoff, most people worry, of course, about what the future will bring. Taking care of yourself after being laid off involves its own tool kit of survival skills:

- **Accept that you may feel a wide range of emotions:** anger at being selected for layoff; worry about finding another position quickly; depressed mood about the effects of being laid off on you and your family; insecurity about future employment; boredom if your job search takes a while.

- **Get the information you need:** Contact Human Resources for benefit information. Your local unemployment office can also tell you what government benefits you may qualify for as well as what job search workshops and resources are available. Talk to friends, neighbors, and coworkers about job possibilities. Consider retraining for a new career. Sometimes government programs are available to train people for jobs where there are shortages of trained personnel.

- **Involve your family, including children, in your planning to manage finances** during the job search period. Assure children there will be food on the table, but that some temporary changes may be needed. Children’s ideas and efforts to conserve expenses can contribute to good family support during a difficult time and teach them important lessons on healthy coping with life’s challenges.

- **Talk to loved ones about your reactions and emotions.** Be particularly attuned to signs of emotional distress such as insomnia, irritability, and concentration difficulties. Increased headaches, stomach distress, or back pain can also mask anxiety or depressed mood.

- **Practice good stress-management techniques:** exercise; eat healthy food; limit alcohol intake since it adds to depressed mood; continue enjoyable hobbies.

- **Consider individual consultation with the employee assistance service** if: taking time to assess your strengths and remembering your gifts isn’t moving you along towards a successful job search and if emotional distress intensifies or doesn’t diminish in the 2-3 weeks after a layoff. This service continues indefinitely for you after the layoff.

For individual consultation and support, contact:

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