

Surviving Layoffs and Terminations: Coping Strategies for Remaining Employees



Surviving a layoff/termination may result in a wide range of reactions from disbelief and shock, to sadness, anger, and in some cases, relief.

Reactions will vary depending on the scale of the job loss and the resulting impacts. Managing these reactions and the 'new normal' within your workplace will likely require some adjustments. Your wellness strategy will have a direct bearing on your mental health and your workplace productivity.

Typical Stress Reactions for Remaining Employees

An important step in dealing with recent workplace changes will be recognizing your personal reactions to the news and any resulting changes impacting your role and job responsibilities.

Your reactions will be impacted by your personal circumstances, current stressors, and other work experiences. Reactions will vary in frequency, intensity, and duration, but typically will fall into four main areas:

Emotional Reactions: guilt; anger; anxiety; apathy; irritability; sadness; and relief.

Physical Reactions: sleep disturbances; digestion problems; fatigue; headaches; and hyperactivity.

Cognitive Reactions: confusion; daydreaming; disorganization;

preoccupation; decreased memory; and decision-making difficulties.

Behavioural Reactions: diminished morale; communication difficulties; withdrawing from colleagues and managers; increased isolation; questioning organizational policies/decisions; and increasing demands directed toward managers.

You may even entertain the thought of taking steps to seek employment elsewhere.

All of the reactions listed above are normal responses following workplace layoffs and terminations.

Organizational layoffs and loss of colleagues is beyond your control, so it is understandable that you may feel vulnerable (worrying about job security) which can provoke a range of stress-related reactions.



Need more information or assistance? All calls are completely confidential.

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Self-Care Considerations Following Layoffs and Terminations

What Can You Do That Will Be Helpful?

There are several things you can do to mitigate your reactions and ensure your own well-being. Personal interpretations of workplace changes paired with active coping strategies can make a significant impact on your ability to navigate through this uncertain period.

Resilience, or bouncing back from stressful events, is possible. It is quite normal for people to cope well with adversities and the unexpected.

Self-care during times of workplace transition is important. Here are some strategies to consider:

- **Your social and family network (including workplace colleagues you are close with) can be helpful external support sources.** Emotional strength and resilience comes from meaningful relationships and strong connections with others, especially during stressful life events.
- **Intense feelings are 'normal' and can act as a guide.** It is what you do with these intense feelings that matter most, not the fact that you experience them.
- **Negativity is contagious and unhelpful during times of workplace challenge.** It can be helpful to avoid engaging in negative communication you observe or are being pulled into post-layoffs.
- **Workplace change following stressful events usually requires a period of reframing your thinking about what just happened so you can determine where to go from here.** Resilience to get through tough times can be strengthened with a willingness to reflect on what has just passed and flexibility around your thinking to create a different perspective moving forward.
- **For some of us, connecting with our faith or sense of spirituality can be helpful.** If this approach fits for you, you may consider connecting with your spiritual community or engaging in your spiritual practices, to provide comfort and strengthen hope.
- **Exercise, no matter what activities you engage in, even if light or moderate, can be very helpful in promoting your physical and psychological well-being.** You might consider incorporating some level of regular exercise into your daily routine (such as walking the dog, going to a gym, etc.).
- **Positive emotions fuel resilience and recovery.** As you move through the post-layoffs transition you may consider allowing yourself to mindfully enjoy positive moments and humour among family, friends and co-workers.

Need more assistance or support? For more information, to book a counselling session or to access Homewood Health for any additional assistance or support, contact our Client Services Centre available to you 24/7 in English and French. All calls are completely confidential.

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