

Facing A Job Loss



You have just learned that, for whatever reason, you may soon lose your job. Since your work allows you to satisfy many needs (e.g., financial security, self-esteem, prestige, a sense of belonging and value) it is never easy to face the possibility of losing your job. As with any loss, losing a job is an experience you must learn to live with. Even though it does not make it easier, it is helpful to know that generally people's response to this experience follows normal and well known steps.

I'm dreaming! Someone, wake me up!

When someone faces the possibility of the loss of a job, it is normal to feel shocked, incredulous, and angry. We cannot believe what is happening, nor can we grasp it to its full extent. That is why we feel: "I must be dreaming."

Almost simultaneous to this first set of reactions is a period of denial. With the gradual awareness of the loss and of what it implies, we tend to create all kinds of scenarios in order to deny what is obvious or to delay the full awareness of what might become the inevitable: "It is an error," "Someone has made a mistake," "They will call me back," "They will realize their mistake," "They will sign a new contract that is going to change all of that," etc.

Acting as if nothing has changed

We then realize that this reality is unlikely to change. We try to negotiate with the situation, first by trying to act as if nothing has really changed. Or, we may try to pretend that the situation will not force us to change some of our habits or behaviours. In fact, we are trying to act as if it may still be possible that the change did not really take place.

Despair

Gradually, we realize that our situation will never be the same and we must face the music. It is often at this stage that we fully grasp what has been lost along with our job. It is often at this time that many of us experience despair which often translates into anger and aggressiveness, or into discouragement, depression or other self-deprecating behaviours. It is also a period when we can question some of our choices and priorities, evaluate ourselves, and find our inner strength and the resources to regain control of the situation instead of being controlled by it.

Let's get organized

As we learn to live with the fact that things will never be the same anymore, we begin to look forward. We mobilize our energy and gradually get ready to take on new plans and projects which will help us get through this situation. At the same time we begin to notice new opportunities and new ways of resuming a productive life. This is normally the last phase of our adaptation to such a dramatic change: we feel it is now over and that we can be confident again.

How long will it last?

There is no single response to this question. Some people may go through this journey very quickly while others will require a longer period of time. Obviously the phases which have just been described are not always so clear, and it is more than normal to feel as if we were alternating between one and the other. One morning we may feel despair while in the evening our confidence is back and we feel ready to face new work projects. What is important here is to keep in mind that it is a normal process which requires some time to evolve.

What can you do?

- 1. Do not devalue yourself.** Chances are that you are not responsible for the loss of your job and that you could not have done anything about it.
- 2. Maintain a positive attitude.** You will need all your energy to maintain your motivation and to get organized so you can take on new work projects. Do not waste it with negative and self-deprecating thoughts which lead nowhere.
- 3. Take the time to assess your work experience.** Losing your job does not mean that you have lost your skills, aptitudes, and accomplishments. Doing such an assessment will help you regain confidence in yourself. This should also help you better understand what you really like and are good at, and to identify the various skills you have and the others you may want to improve.
- 4. Take the time to sit down and prepare a plan which will help you organize your time and find a new job.** Find out which work sector is best suited to your aptitudes, interests, and experience. What is going to be your job search strategy? Do you know who the potential employers are in the sector you are looking at? How will you approach them? Are you prepared to move to another area to work? Do you know people, groups or other resources that may assist you with your efforts? Establish a schedule which will help you assess your progress and keep your motivation as high as possible.
- 5. Do you feel ready to launch your own business?** The loss of your job may allow you to create your own business.
- 6. If you experience difficulties in assessing your interests and skills, or if you do not know where to start with your action plan, do not hesitate to seek help.** Several professional and community resources can help you. Your Assistance Program may be of great support. Do not hesitate to take advantage of the various services that your employer may provide you with. Seasoned professionals will assist you in making decisions at various levels. Often, they can help you plan and realize your personal action plan.
- 7. Take the time to talk about your reactions and feelings with your family, relatives or close friends.** It is time to ask them for their support and advice.
- 8. Take care of yourself.** During this transition period, it is imperative that you continue to live, go out with family or friends, exercise, or engage in hobbies or cultural and social events. This should help you recharge your batteries and develop a different perspective on your situation.
- 9. Profit from the experience.** What have you learned about yourself? How do you react to such a stressful situation? What are your resources – both inner and external? These are some of the elements that can contribute to making this experience an opportunity for growth as well as personal development.

Need more information or assistance? For more information, to book a counselling session, or to access any of your Assistance Program services our Client Services Representatives are ready to speak with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in English or French. All calls are completely confidential.

1.800.663.1142 | **1.866.398.9505** (Numéro sans frais – en français)

1.888.384.1152 (TTY) | **604.689.1717** (International Call Collect)

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