

COMMON REACTIONS TO JOB LOSS

AND WAYS TO COPE



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COMMON REACTIONS

Though we are all inundated by lay-off news, it is still a shock when it touches us. Regardless of the amount of anticipation that may exist around a possible lay-off, once it becomes real for us, we tend to experience a roller-coaster of responses.

Over the years, EAPs have supported numerous employees and organizations through organizational changes and their impacts. In these conversations there are a few things that have been consistent in employee responses:

1. *It is hard to not personalize the cuts; there are questions of "why me?"*
2. *There is a range of feelings including sadness, anger, and disbelief*
3. *Many beliefs about our professional self and the organization may be challenged*
4. *There is anxiety about what will be next*
5. *There is an unexpected drop in self-confidence and there can be an urge to isolate*

During these challenging economic times, it may seem hard to imagine other employment possibilities, which can trigger a sense of hopelessness. It becomes very important to be conscious of how you are talking to yourself about this change in your life. At the same time, as you talk with your support system, be aware of relationships that give you encouragement or hope versus relationships that tend to intensify the negativity or discouragement about the future. Choose relationships that lift you up.



SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING

- Do what you can to focus on the present and the things that you have control over at this moment.
- Connect virtually with job support groups in your area and learn from others about what has worked for them. You don't have to figure things out on your own.
- Expect that once you deal with some of the immediate concrete decisions like health insurance options and unemployment options, the feelings about what has happened may hit a little harder.
- Try to maintain or create routine and structure in your day
- Try to define some new measures of success that have to do with coping with a new experience in your life.
- Identify one activity that you feel good about in your life and make sure that you are making time for that activity.
- Though you didn't choose this break in employment, use the time to step back and think about your strengths, skills and interests. Sometimes we are so attached to a job title that we lose sight of the bigger picture of our skills. It may be helpful to ask former coworkers or managers to give you their feedback about what makes you a good employee.
- Keep talking with your support system. One of the things that can happen when we isolate is that we lose perspective and that can increase our negative thinking.