

JOB LOSS



Taking Stock

Being downsized is never easy. **Evan Thompson** offers tips on how to regroup and plan the next phase of your career

You may have seen it coming. Whether it's the result of a merger, cost-cutting, nasty politics, or performance-related, your boss, partners or shareholders have terminated your position.

If your job loss came as a surprise, you still need time to process your new reality. You may feel anger, shame, or a need to get even with those who you feel wronged by. You may worry about how you will begin again and restore lost income and your trust in others.

You may be tempted to immediately propel yourself into search mode. But first, hit pause, and consider these five questions and how to move forward.

How is my job loss affecting my health, mood, and personal relationships?

It's natural to feel anxious and lose sleep in the days following your termination. Wherever possible, keep exercising as you have always done. Or, consider going to fitness classes if you have not made time for exercise in the past. Working out and being with others in a high-energy environment will raise your mood and take your mind off of things. You will be able to think more clearly after your workout, as well.

Spend time with your family and pitch in with chores and other activities for which you once had no time. This can help boost your relationships with family members when you need them most. Socializing with good friends will also raise your confidence and rejuvenate relationships you have let drift.

Is my anger and disappointment making me do things I may regret?

These emotions are part of any grieving process, and the loss of a job is no different. You may miss your routine, colleagues, and the feeling of being valued while serving clients.

You may act on these feelings in many ways, such as being impatient with family and friends, impulse shopping, food or alcohol bingeing, or wanting to seek revenge against your former employer or colleague(s).

A healthy approach is to take advantage of some third-party counselling. It is hard to predict when resentment or negative thoughts might suddenly bubble up following another setback. Your job search may be long and frustrating, and you need support to get you through it.

Sometimes, counsellors are offered as part of a severance package.

Do I feel my dismissal was unjustified and improperly managed by my employer?

You may not have been in the right frame of mind to properly negotiate your severance package and acted hastily when you were let go. After taking some time to consider the issues, the terms of your departure may not sit well with you. Consult a lawyer to see if you can go back to your former employer and renegotiate your severance package.

Working with an employment lawyer to review your situation and help you negotiate a fair settlement is simply good business and well worth the investment in yourself and your future.

Do I have a trusted support team in place to help me through this disruptive time?

You can find support from just about anyone who you trust and knows you well. It sounds obvious, but we often overlook the most natural sources of support and advice when we are in flux and looking for a job to ward off financial and other concerns.

A seasoned coach can also help you get you in shape for business networking and interviews. As interviewing techniques become more complex, you'll need to understand your strengths and challenges before launching into the job search arena. What may have worked for you in the past may need some fine tuning. For example, different age groups have different communication styles. What's the best way to navigate each group?

Is it time to consider another career?

Scholar Brené Brown once suggested that we let go of who others feel we should be and embrace who we really are. Sometimes when people experience a setback, it's the push they need to try something different. Start by listing the pros and cons of staying in the industry, and then seek opinions and feedback on your skills.

Honest conversations with family and friends are a good place to start planning your next move. While career counsellors can guide you through aptitude tests that match your skill sets, only you will know if your next career is the right fit. **E**

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