

## *Coping with Job Loss and Uncertainty (Part 2: Reassess)*

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Job loss can be very unsettling and even the uncertainty of your job's stability may leave you feeling vulnerable and lost. This series of articles covers a four part process for coping and moving on. The process involves gathering strength, reassessing your situation, making a plan to move forward, and sustaining the enthusiasm to implement your plan. This article (part 2 of 4) focuses on techniques and ideas to help you reassess your situation.

When your job and income are lost or are potentially in jeopardy, it may feel like you are in crisis. One way to describe a crisis is having no plan for what to do next. When this happens, it is natural to respond one of two ways. We may want to give up entirely or jump directly to action. Neither of those choices benefit us in the long run. It is easy to see how giving up leads to no action, no hope, and no future. Jumping directly to action without time to reassess and plan can create a lot of activity. However, that activity may be in the wrong direction, may be at the wrong time, or even prevent us from finding an opportunity opening before us.

To prevent fruitless activity, you need a plan. The step that allows you to plan is making a thorough assessment of the situation. The assessment process will allow you to take a fuller perspective of your situation, desires, dreams, and goals. Try the following strategies to help reassess your situation.

### **Reassessment:**

*Reflect on your current or past job:* Take some time to reflect on either your current job that is uncertain or your past job. Make a list of what you liked about the job (your duties, coworkers, working conditions, sense of meaning/purpose to your work, interest level, etc.). In addition, make a list of what you did not like about your job. As you review your lists, circle the things that are most important to you. This can lead you to reflect

on the "non-negotiables". For example: you may realize that you found no purpose in your work, and determine that purpose will be a criteria for future jobs. You may realize that the part of your work you most enjoyed was connecting with people or being outside, which can lead you to a new career path. Discovering your "non-negotiables" will assist you in planning which is step 3.

*Define your dreams/goals:* Take inventory of your dreams and goals through reflection and writing. Ask yourself the following:

- ◆ What have I always wanted to do/be?
- ◆ What makes me the most fulfilled?
- ◆ What are my talents and interests? Am I using them?
- ◆ What does my heart tell me?
- ◆ What would my ideal job look like?
- ◆ At what do other people say I do well?
- ◆ Where would I like to be in my career?

*Visualize:* If you have a clear vision of what you would like to do and where you would like to be, it is easier to define the steps to attaining your goal. You may wish to use meditation to begin to visualize your ideal job and see yourself successful, happy, and fulfilled. If you typically have difficulty with visual images, you are not alone. About 25% of people rarely have visual images. If this is you, concentrate on what your body would feel like in that job, what your posture would be, what emotions you might feel, what you would sense about that scene, and what you might intuitively "know" about it.

Perhaps you would like to try imaging with music. To further explore how music can enhance and stimulate your meditation and imagery, you can read more in the article "Music for Imaging and Healing" and see music suggestions on Personal Journeys' website (<http://www.musicandimagery.com/articles.html>). Many people find it easier to create images when the music is supporting the process and providing musical elements to stimulate the imagination and allow intuition to flow freely.

*Filling the gap:* Realistically, you may not be able to acquire your ideal job right away. Filling the gap is deciding what you need to do now that will help you achieve your ultimate goal. This may mean that you are willing to take a full or part-time job that is not in your ideal vision to pay the bills. Perhaps it means contracting or working in a variety of settings while you are preparing yourself for your ideal job or waiting for the economy to improve. It may mean returning for additional training or education.

It is important to remember that filling the gap is not wasting time. This step is about continuing to be a responsible adult (paying the bills and living independently) as well as reaping the benefits of continued employment no matter what that job may be. The longer you stay home and reflect on not having prospects, the more likely depression can set in. Staying active (even if volunteering) has the following benefits:

- ◆ Increased sense of self-esteem
- ◆ Increased positive attitude
- ◆ Increased sense of control over one's life

All three of these benefits will make you a more attractive job candidate in your next interview. While a short period of "inactivity" to reassess your situation may feel intolerable or unproductive, taking the time to complete this step will help you focus to develop a solid plan of action and move you in the right direction.

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