

Coping with Job Loss and Uncertainty (Part 3: Planning)

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This article (part 3 of 4) helps you to focus on the planning stage as you cope and/or recover from job loss. Please also refer to part 2 (reassessing your situation) for some ideas on "filling the gap" until you are able to achieve a job that satisfies you.

Usually, when something happens, we can think of a couple of alternatives to cope with the situation. A crisis may be described as not only having no plan B, but having no plan A. This can feel tremendously overwhelming, powerless, and directionless. What do you need to form at least plan A? First, it is to calm the body and mind (see part 1). As the heart rate moves beyond 100 beats per minute, the human mind begins to progressively lose its ability to think rationally and with clarity. Emotions take over. If you are in the emotion stage, take some time to review article 1 and engage in calming activities so that you can begin to focus.

Making a plan to move forward:

Begin with your visualization and reassessment of your past job and desires for a future job (see part 2). Now take the time to reflect on and answer these questions. Writing down your answers can help you feel a solid plan is beginning to form.

- ◆ Do I need any additional skills/training to do the job I desire? If so, where can I receive them? How much time and expense will I need to invest?
- ◆ Is there an entry level position for me that will allow me to begin in my chosen field and provide some income?
- ◆ Do I know anyone who is working in this field and can ask for help?

- ◆ If I don't need new skills, are there any skills I need to expand or take continuing education to stay current in my field? Can I take any of this training online?
- ◆ Do I need or wish to relocate to acquire my next job? If so, what are the steps I need to take? (List all of the steps including logistics of moving, financial costs and funding, acquiring appropriate licenses to work in your new location, finding housing, etc.)

Job hunting. The plan for job hunting will be a composite of many different efforts and resources. Below are ideas to get your started. Set aside time everyday to work on job hunting. If you are unemployed, this is your full-time job now. Make a calendar with job hunting tasks, and be specific. Most of all, keep the appointments you make with yourself.

The old wisdom "it's who you know...." still works today for many people. The first step in job hunting is to let everyone you know or come into contact with know that you are looking for a job in a specific area. Tell your family (even out of state family), your friends, your old colleagues, and your acquaintances in your social or church groups. Even tell strangers, such as the person in line next to you at the store with whom you are already engaged in small talk. You never know who knows of a position that would fit you perfectly. Even if they do not know of a job today, they may just think of you next week or next month when news of a job comes there way.

Find more resources. Many people are already using the Internet to send their resumes to companies and search for job openings. People are also using the classified ads in the newspapers and attending job fairs. While these are helpful outlets, they are generally not the most successful. (Who you know is generally number 1). However, there are other resources that you may have overlooked.

Did you know your local community college and university have career counseling departments? Did you know that they have resources for you to assess your interests and talents, research every job available, and refine your resume and interview skills? Many times these services are free not only to students of the school, but also to the public.. (Sometimes a nominal charge may apply depending on the level of services you access.) These departments also frequently post job openings.

Call and talk to people in person. Perhaps you can call the departments related to your field at the local colleges and ask where their graduates typically find jobs. You can look at job postings on bulletin boards outside the offices of the department instructors.

Call the HR departments of companies in which you are interested. Ask about available jobs. Ask about hiring from without or promoting from within. Ask about how you can express your interest and enthusiasm in their company (ie: how do I get my resume noticed and flagged as a top candidate). Place follow-up phone calls and keep notes of the conversations and important decision dates for those companies.

Your local Department of Economic Security (DES) also posts jobs. Other resources may be veteran's services, job skills training centers, and libraries. Keep your eyes open and remember job hunting is a full-time job.

Dress for success. You may have heard this before many times. That is likely because it is true. Your first impression can make a lasting impression. You never get the opportunity to make that first impression again. Dressing appropriately for the job you apply for shows you have understanding of that position and the culture at that company. Dressing well shows respect and that you value the job, the professionals at that company, and yourself enough to show that you made special effort to appear well-dressed and well-groomed. This applies even when simply turning in a paper application. Literally, there are applications thrown into the trashcan after a potential applicant in ripped jeans and a t-shirt walks out of the door. Avoid having your hard work in your resume, application, time it takes to physically appear at a company thrown away. Let your dress reflect how much you value your job hunting.

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