

When life turns upside down, how can you make it right again?

- Have you experienced a job or serious financial loss?
- A loss due to a sudden death, injury or serious medical diagnosis?
- A sense that you have lost purpose or direction in your life?

Whatever your issue, there are emotional, spiritual and psychological aspects of transitioning your life to the next phase. Dealing with significant loss impacts every aspect of your life.

When you find yourself suddenly without a job you may face challenges in several different areas. Here are some simple tips to ease your mind, body and soul as you seek the next open door. Change your mind, and you can change your life. You are not (ever!) too old to learn new tricks, develop new skills, tap into your already existing networks, use your available resources, and help others while you help yourself.

True, it's hard in a recession to maintain a confident attitude while seeking a new job. But employers have a much larger choice in a down economy, so if you are Gloomy Gus compared to Perky Polly, you can guess which one the employer is most likely to choose. Remember to stress the upbeat: think about what you can do with the skills you already have to make a positive impact if you are interviewed. Meanwhile, use positive self-talk, affirmations, list your strengths, and hang out with supportive people.

Some simple tips to manage your major transition as smoothly as possible:

1. Keep a daily routine. This allows you to maintain a structure similar to the one you had while working. Dress as if you are going to work, so that when you leave the house to do your job search, you are ready if you unexpectedly run into someone you know.
2. Set aside time each day for the actual job search. You may have a short term need, but remember your long-term focus, and the direction you most want to go ultimately. Ask yourself these basic questions:
 - What do you like?
 - What do you NOT like?
 - What are you good at?
 - What do you need to improve?
 - What are your hopes and dreams around work?

3. Seek out support. There is no point in suffering alone. You'll just make yourself crazy. Know what kind of help you need: do you need some serious therapy to heal the pain and move on? Or do you need a coach to focus on the immediate issue at hand to help provide some accountability for short-term goals? Let your immediate family know how you are feeling, and what you need or don't need. Learn to be grateful for everything you do have: friends, family, church, or civic organizations you belong to. Keep up a social life with supportive friends; it's a lot better than sitting at home gazing at your navel.
4. Be realistic about your budget. Plan low-cost or free forms of entertainment: exercise with friends or family, find a movie in the park, volunteer for a service project, invite friends over for a potluck dinner. Remember that eating well and getting physical activity keeps you at your best. This will help reduce your stress, and stress is a natural consequence of job hunting. Keeping active and fit will boost your confidence and help keep depression at bay.
5. Learn to answer the dreaded question, "What do you do?" neutrally. You are, "A lawyer by training;" "fulfilling your goal to become a better dancer;" "working on a major home renovation project;" "writing a book about job hunting on the Internet." It may even become true. If you set up a project for yourself to fulfill, you can then talk about your goals and accomplishments in that next job interview. Find a way to tie your current activities to achieving your goals, your future position, your anticipated roles in situations to come.

Bonus tip: Relax daily: take time to do something you enjoy. Whether it's a walk in the woods, a bubble bath or singing, make sure you are recharging your own batteries. It may not end the difficulties in your life, but it is certain to make them more bearable.

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Specializing in helping faculty, administrators and graduate students find their focus, in or out of academia.