

Services for displaced employees

Losing a job due to a reorganization or layoff ranks as one of the most difficult experiences employees are likely to encounter in their professional lives. Successfully adjusting to this situation and moving forward quickly to begin seeking a new position may require support. The Center for Work and Family Life offers the following services to employees affected by layoff or reorganization:

- Confidential counseling with a licensed behavioral health professional
- Help to overcome the grief and loss associated with this challenging experience
- Stress management
- Construction of simple household budgets
- Support for dependent family members who may be affected by this situation
- Referral to community resources as necessary

Contact the Center for Work and Family Life online at <https://employees.usc.edu/work-family-life> or call **(213) 821-0800**. Whether you take advantage of their services or not, please consider the following helpful information.

Coping with a layoff

When a person's job ends involuntarily, it is normal to feel a sense of loss and to take time to heal. At least temporarily, you have lost many things important to you, including your daily work routine, work associations, structure for your days, financial security, and status. Even though the job loss is due to reorganization and is not your fault, it is common to feel some loss of self-esteem, and think that somehow you have failed. Additionally, it can be hard to tell your friends and family.

Loss and the grieving process

Loss triggers a grieving process that may include the stages of shock and denial, anger, resistance, sadness and, finally, acceptance.

- Shock and denial: even though you may have known for some time that the job would end, it is still a shock when you get the actual message. It will take some time to absorb the reality of the news
- Anger: you may be angry at yourself, your employer and even your family. Thoughts like "How could they do this to me?" or "Why did I work so hard for them?" are a normal part of the grief process
- Resistance: sometimes you may find yourself resisting the inevitability of the layoff, e.g., "If I offer to reduce my hours or cut my pay, they will take me back." In time you will fully accept the reality of your situation
- Sadness: it is normal to experience feelings of sadness and to want to withdraw after a job loss. However, if your job search is extended or you have other predisposing factors, you may become vulnerable to clinical depression. Getting professional help is critical as depression can interfere with your energy and effectiveness in finding a job
- Acceptance: finally, we all work through loss and grief in our own way, come to accept what has happened, and move on.

You may cycle back and forth between stages. You will have good days and bad days - as if you are on an emotional roller coaster. Be patient with yourself and the process. Eventually, things will even out.

Managing the stress of a job loss

Give yourself time to adjust.

Allow yourself some time to absorb what has happened, and to deal with your initial emotional reactions and the reactions of your loved ones. Be open to support from and discussions with those at work.

Don't be ashamed.

Considering all the jobs that have been lost in the last decade, there is very little stigma attached to losing your job due to economic factors. And it is not a matter of personal failure to lose one's job due to cutbacks.

Tell your family and friends as soon as possible.

By opening up to those who care about you, you have support from the most important people in your life. They may also be helpful in finding a new job.

Keep open communication with your significant other.

Spouses, partners, and children are also affected by your job loss. Give them permission to talk about their reactions and concerns. Have a family meeting to discuss how the family will cope, and get everyone's ideas. Explain the economic forces that led to the job loss. Reassure children that the family will work together to get through this time.

Think of the job loss as a temporary setback.

The way we "frame" what happens to us shapes how we cope and move forward. This is a challenge, not a failure, and not "the end of the world." Don't compare yourself with others who have lost their job - everyone deals with it differently. Think positive thoughts, like "I can handle this one step at a time."

Join a job seeker's support group.

No one can understand what you are going through better than your peers. Often you can share thoughts and feelings in a support group that you cannot share elsewhere. You will get good advice and won't feel isolated.

Use every community and networking resource available.

Now is not the time to try to go it alone. Reach out and use everything that is offered to you by USC and the community. A crisis like this gives you the opportunity and permission to get help.

Share your feelings with trusted family and friends.

Admit to significant others and your support system your feelings of anger, fear, frustration and sadness to help you stay consistent and motivated. Keep a written journal of how you feel and what is happening to release for your feelings.

Deal with your fears directly.

One good way to reduce anxiety is to clarify what you are most afraid of and work on a plan to address fear. As the statement goes, "the biggest thing we have to fear is fear itself" - and the way it paralyzes us and pulls us down.

Avoid negative people and ways of thinking.

Spend time with people who are confident in you and your future and who have worked through their own crises in a positive manner. Talk to those who have constructive ideas and advice. Notice the positive side of unemployment and enjoy it, such as how you have more time for hobbies or family.

Do what you can and accept what you cannot change.

Remember the serenity prayer: “grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Despite all your hard work in searching for a job, many other factors will also determine when you find work.

Take care of your health.

Sleep, exercise, relaxation and good nutrition are more important than ever during the stress of unemployment. Use the extra time to set up that exercise program you never had time for when you were working so hard. Avoid the use of drugs and alcohol to deal with stress. Take scheduled breaks from your job search and allow time for fun.

Get professional help, when needed.

If you are feeling very sad and in despair and this does not improve over time, if you are feeling paralyzed by anxiety, or if your sleep is consistently disturbed - seek help from a mental health professional.

If unemployment leads to relationship problems at home - you may need the help of a couples or family counselor. The Center for Work and Family has professional staff members available to meet with employees who are experiencing the personal and work-related stress of layoffs – contact them at **(213) 821-0800** or visit their site at **<https://employees.usc.edu/work-family-life>**.