

The Best Worst Thing that Ever Happened to You

How to turn job loss into a brand new beginning



can't get out of bed, stay there for awhile. You'll get up eventually. Reach out to those you're closest to. Tell them what you need—a friendly sounding board is most often the requirement."

Regroup

Ane Powers, principal of Washington, DC-based The White Hawk Group, a career coaching and leadership development company, says the next step is to address your finances. "Look at your budget. Are you eligible for severance or vacation pay, unemployment benefits? How long will you have access to health insurance? What are your fixed expenses (housing, food, insurance, Internet, phone) and where can you cut back? Subtract the cost of your essentials from funds you can count on to determine the date you must have a paycheck."

Writing this information down helps make it real and easier to comprehend than when fear is muddling the figures and creating fatalistic thoughts in your mind.

The time following a job loss is perfect for reevaluating your personal values in order to find a better, more satisfying career. Ask yourself: "Did I really love my previous job? What are my strengths, what life issues are important to me, what do I most enjoy doing? Am I basing my lifestyle on what society or others have told me I should want? Is it time to find something more in line with what's really important to me?"

Powers says that those with the means to access a career coach will receive valuable support in finding answers. Others should look to state employment security workshops and employment programs

through churches and colleges that frequently offer free testing to help individuals clarify their talents, skills and values.

Dr. Marla Zipin, a psychologist with a coaching and psychotherapy practice in the DC-area, recommends the free online VIA Signature Strengths Test (www.authenticappinness.sas.upenn.edu) as a helpful resource for identifying your core values.

Finding the bright side

Keeping a positive outlook is important says Zipin, "Look at other doors that have closed and remember the ones that subsequently opened and your resiliency. Look at what you're telling yourself and shift your negative to optimistic thinking. Cultivate appreciation for the small, good things in your life and watch how your attitude changes."

Finney agrees. "Open up your mind to the possibility that you'll find the job you love. Look for stories about people doing extraordinary jobs you think you'd like and learn the language of the job. Double-check your negative assumptions. Why shouldn't you have a new rewarding career?"

Powers and Finney also agree that the positive side to the numerous job losses during these lean economic times is that it's forced all of us to become more proactive in our careers. Powers says that the days of working at the same company and receiving benefits for life are over; remaining vigilant in assessing per-

sonal values and continuously building skills and contacts are now the key to career survival.

Planning for great connections

Powers cautions job seekers still reeling from their loss to resist creating a resume before they know what they want to say and whom they want to say it to. Instead create a 25-word pitch that highlights your skills and talents—and attracts the interest of others.

And plan to get out of the house to use it. Sure, there are jobs online, but people hire people who know people. Face-to-face networking is one of the most important things you can do to look for work—and relieve isolation and revive hope. Attending networking events at least once or twice a week, equipped with your personalized pitch is far more likely to get a response from those you meet than "I'm looking for a job." **CF**

osing a job in the flash of a pink slip is never easy. It impacts your income, identity and relationships. Martha Finney, author of *Rebound: A Proven Plan for Starting Over After Job Loss* acknowledges job loss is traumatic. "You've been told you have no place in the world you lived in. It's a terrible thing that's happened, but it's happened. Now it's up to you to decide if you're going to punish yourself or use the circumstance to your advantage."

First things first

It's completely normal to feel isolated, angry, sad and scared, even if you had an inkling the end was near. Finney says it's important to take a week or two to grieve. "If you

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