

# Coping with Job Loss

## Objective

To increase your well-being and maintain a positive outlook following a job loss.

## What to Know

Facing job loss adds stress you might not have previously imagined – including being isolated from colleagues and feelings of uncertainty, fear, anxiety, panic, and helplessness. At one time, your job provided you with time structure, identity, purpose, and social interaction. You may be experiencing many emotions and troubling thoughts.

Losing your job can impact many areas of your life, including:

- **Financial Stability.** Loss of income may lead to difficulties in meeting monthly expenses and managing debt.
- **Emotional Well-being.** Feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, and loss of self-esteem can arise.
- **Social Connections.** Job loss can reduce social interactions and support networks, leading to feelings of isolation.
- **Routine and Structure.** The loss of daily work routines can lead to a lack of time structure and purpose.
- **Professional Identity.** Work often provides a sense of identity and accomplishment, which can be lost with unemployment.
- **Future Opportunities.** Concerns about career prospects and the ability to find new employment can create uncertainty and fear about the future.
- **Personal Relationships.** Stress and financial strain can affect relationships with loved ones, leading to potential conflicts and misunderstandings.
- **Health.** Prolonged stress and anxiety can negatively impact physical health, leading to issues such as sleep disturbances, headaches, and other stress-related conditions.

Check off any of the following that apply to you:

- I feel like I have lost my sense of purpose.
- I feel sad and depressed most of the time.
- I feel fearful.
- I miss having structure and a routine.
- I feel unimportant and unappreciated.
- I feel anger and jealousy at people who are employed.
- I feel lost and do not know what to do next.

- I feel disconnected from my former co-workers.
- People close to me do not understand what I am going through.
- I am worried about how I will take care of myself and my family.
- I am having trouble managing my monthly expenses.
- I am struggling with paying off my debts.
- I feel isolated and lonely.
- I am anxious about my future career prospects.
- I am concerned about my ability to find new employment.
- I have noticed a decline in my physical health.
- I am having trouble sleeping.
- I frequently experience headaches.
- I feel stressed most of the time.
- My relationships with loved ones are becoming strained.
- I often feel misunderstood by those around me.
- I feel overwhelmed by my current situation.
- Add up your score.

*\*If you have checked more than three of these statements, consider seeking a mental health professional or support group for help. If you have thoughts of hurting yourself, immediately call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255. You can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.*

Not everyone will experience these thoughts and feelings, but even if you think you are coping well with unemployment, you might sometimes experience one or more of them. Accept that what you feel is normal and remember to give yourself credit for doing the best you can under the circumstances.

As you face this challenging time, it is essential you take care of yourself. Your situation may be stressful and unstable, but there are things you can do to increase your well-being and maintain a positive outlook. Here are six strategies for increasing your well-being if you have recently lost your job:

**Be kind to yourself.** Remember, losing your job does not mean you have failed. Keep the following points in mind:

- **You are much more than your job.** Work is important, but it is not what makes you who you are because you have characteristics, skills, values, and attributes unrelated to your job.
- **Avoid thinking errors.** You may draw incorrect conclusions when you are upset and stressed. You might incorrectly blame yourself.
- **Remember unemployment is not permanent.** Revise your resume and begin networking. Yes, this situation is difficult, but you will eventually find employment. Try not to lose perspective.

**Retain your social connections.** Communicating with others is an important way to keep your mind occupied because isolation leaves space for ruminating or worrying – potentially leading to depression or anxiety. Talk to someone you trust about your situation, whether that is a family member, friend, colleague, counselor, or mentor. Catch up regularly with family and friends.

**Stick to a routine.** Make a calendar for the week, dividing the days into morning, afternoon, and evening. Wake up and go to bed at the same time each day. Ensure your schedule includes regular activities like set mealtimes, exercise, and hobbies.

**Do the following every day:**

- One pleasurable activity that makes you feel good, such as watching a favorite program or eating a piece of chocolate.
- One achievement activity that makes you feel like you are productive and functioning, such as enrolling in an online course, posting on LinkedIn, or revising your resume.

**Exercise regularly.** Consistently working out reduces stress and helps with symptoms of depression and anxiety.

**Clear your mind.** Turn off the news and avoid “doom scrolling” on social media. Take a “time-out” for at least one hour every day, when you practice mindfulness using an app such as [HeadSpace](#) to quiet your anxious or racing thoughts. Slow down and focus on the “here and now.”

**Seek out resources.** If you are having trouble providing basic needs for yourself or your family, you can turn to community resources for assistance. Getting help with basic needs, such as food and shelter, can reduce the stress of unemployment. Local, state, or government resources (such as food banks) are available to help. In the United States you can get affordable health insurance through [HealthCare.gov](#) if you no longer have health insurance coverage. Unemployment may also be available.

This worksheet will help you increase your well-being and maintain a positive outlook following the loss of your job.

### **What to Do**

First, answer the following questions.

What are you good at? What are your skills? Be specific.

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What do you care about?

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What do you know?

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What characteristics can you count on within yourself?

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Write down three of your strengths.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Who can you connect with? Write down three people you can contact.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Each day for the next two weeks, choose at least two activities from the previous list of suggestions. For example, on the first day, you might make a calendar and schedule daily activities. There are many types of activities you can do, including journaling, relaxing with a good book, or baking a cake with your children. You might schedule time to connect with colleagues or search for jobs online. Use the chart to schedule these activities. Write down the date, the activity, and how you feel after completing the activity. Write down any notes or follow-up required.

Date	Activity	How did you feel after?	Follow-Up / Notes

Date	Activity	How did you feel after?	Follow-Up / Notes

What activity helped you the most? Describe.

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What was most challenging about this exercise?

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Did this exercise increase your well-being and help you maintain a positive outlook? Why or why not?

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What else can you do to increase your well-being?

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

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