

Coping with Losing Your Job Employee Handout

For some people, losing their job is one of the most difficult things that can happen. If this is true for you, you need to know that

- It isn't your fault
- It's all right to feel bad about it
- You're not a bad person
- You can survive this, your life isn't over

Loss is a loss is a loss. Losing a job can be a lot like losing someone close to you and can bring up the same painful feelings, like – disbelief and denial, wanting to escape or hide, guilt, frustration, anger, deep and persistent sadness, a wish to turn back the clock, loss of control over your life and powerlessness.

But even though you may find this hard to believe right now, nothing lasts forever - and you will be able to cope with this challenge.

How to Manage the Transition Process

Talk About It

Often the worst thing to do in a situation like this is to “clam up” and try to deal with it alone. The strong feelings you are dealing with make it very hard to think straight, make decisions, or take action. Talking out the feelings is the best way to get perspective, even if you are typically a very private person.

Find the Right Person To Talk To

The best person to talk over something this difficult -

- will be on your side, but not emotionally involved in the problem
- will be interested in helping you but not try to take over or fix it
- will be a good listener - warm, not judgmental, and positive
- will be honest, sincere and able to keep your secrets
- will respect your thoughts and feelings
- will know how to help you work out the right answers for yourself
- will not have a hidden agenda and will not want you to do what they say

If you already know a person like this, make some time to talk with them. If you don't, you may call the USC Center for Work & Family Life and talk to a member of their professional staff, your primary care physician or medical provider, or the National Mental Health Hotline at 1-800-969-6642. Any of these resources can assist you in locating an appropriate professional.

Get a Balanced Perspective

This is something that has happened **to you**, but it isn't the only thing that is important **about you**. There's a lot more to you as a person and now is the time to focus on the positive things about you since you may already be feeling negative.

If you have difficulty recalling positive things about yourself at this time, it often helps to write things down. Get a piece of paper and list all the accomplishments that you're proud of, the difficulties you've surmounted, and the problems you've solved. Write everything you can think of, this isn't the time to be modest. Take a day or two and be thorough.

On another list, write all the skills you have, no matter where you've acquired them. Again, take your time and list all the things you do competently.

When you feel low, review your lists and remind yourself how many things you are able to do and how much you have achieved in your life.

Look for Solutions

It can be very difficult to look to the future during difficult times. However, the situation has already happened, so it makes sense to spend time thinking about future possibilities and what you would like to make happen next.

Thinking about solutions and trying them will often break the log-jam of inertia and if you can get yourself to do something, it will often free you up and give you confidence to go on, getting back into control.

It usually does not help to solve problems if you.....

- just hope it will go away and do anything
- try to work it out in your head without writing it down
- bottle it up and refuse to discuss it with anybody.

Self Care After Loss

- ✓ Maintain some structure in your life, especially around meals and sleeping
- ✓ Schedule some time each day to do things you enjoy
- ✓ Drink fewer than 3 cups of caffeinated beverages
- ✓ Limit alcohol consumption; remember alcohol is a depressant
- ✓ Exercise 2 –3 times per week
- ✓ Keep a journal
- ✓ Maintain your sense of humor
- ✓ Write down goals to provide direction
- ✓ Talk to trusted others
- ✓ Listen to your own internal wisdom