



Coping With Involuntary Separation

Finding out that you are losing your job often comes as a shock. It can be devastating to lose not only your source of income, but also your sense of identity, your daily routine, your coworkers, and security that comes with employment. Being separated involuntarily is a type of loss, and often results in grieving reactions. It can be helpful to understand that your reactions and feelings are a normal part of processing this loss. Also provided are some ideas on how to help yourself move forward.

COMMON REACTIONS TO JOB LOSS

- Shock and disbelief
- Anger and resentment
- Sadness and depression
- Guilt
- Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Fear and anxiety
- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appetite
- Little motivation or interest in things
- Intense feelings of stress
- Lowered self-esteem
- Physical reactions such as a headache, upset stomach, or fatigue

THE GRIEVING PROCESS

It is common to grieve the loss of a job similarly to grieving the loss of a person or something else important in your life. The important thing to remember about the grieving process is that it does not happen in linear stages as if you must experience and work through each one. The grieving process is different for everyone. However, there are four tasks that most people work through during the grieving process.

- Accepting that the loss has happened.
- Giving yourself permission to explore and express your feelings related to the loss - this may include times of intense anger, guilt, sadness, etc.
- Adjusting to a world without that job - mentally, emotionally, and physically.
- Moving forward - searching for and obtaining a new job or career.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

- You may want to take a little time off before job searching to recharge and relax. Allow yourself time to process what happened.
- Try not to make any major decisions in the immediate aftermath, until the intense emotions have subsided.
- Know that involuntary separations are a financial decision by the company. Although it is normal for your self-esteem to be affected, try to keep in mind that it was not your fault.
- Evaluate your satisfaction with your career. This may be a good time to change your line of work or go back to school. Think of this as an opportunity to make some positive changes in your life.

- Make a plan. What are you looking for in a job? What are your goals? What are your interests? How will you job search? When will you job search?
- Update your resume. Focus on your strengths and experience.
- Surround yourself with friends and family who love and support you.
- Review your budget. Get together with the appropriate people in your life and decide together where costs can be cut.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Using drugs and/or alcohol to cope with stress or sleep - they prevent restful sleep and can reduce your body's ability to handle stress.
- Be cautious with caffeine or other stimulants - you may want to decrease your usual intake, as they can increase anxiety.
- Negative thinking - try to focus on what you CAN do, and where there might be new opportunities.
- Isolating - although it is not uncommon to feel like isolating from others, it is usually not helpful and can make coping with your struggles more difficult.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Eat healthy and drink lots of water - your body and mind need the nutrients to recover from stress and expel the stress chemicals.
- Engage in regular exercise - this helps to boost chemicals that improve mood, reduce stress, and improve sleep.
- Try to maintain your usual sleep routine - if having trouble sleeping, get up and do a relaxing activity for a little while to distract your mind from worries.
- Do some things you enjoy - part of taking care of yourself is making time to relax and have fun.
- Talk to someone - family, friends, coworkers, a counselor, faith mentor, or anyone else whom you feel comfortable sharing your feelings with and is helpful to you.
- Create a new routine - as soon as you are able to, create a new routine; this may help you regain your sense of control and predictability of life.
- Think about other times - when you have coped with difficult situations. What positive coping strategies worked for you then? Can you practice those now?
- Connect to spiritual roots; create new ones.



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