



The Official Bulletin of Greater Pittsburgh Psychological Association

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A View From the Chair

Steven Feinstein, Ph.D.

President of GPPA

These are interesting times in our nation and community. Most reports indicate Pittsburgh is doing fairly well economically compared to many parts of our nation. However, fairly well is really not so good. Clients are faced with difficult decisions and increased distress, while at the same time many have lost resources to seek assistance. Those less fortunate socioeconomically are often the most vulnerable during these times.

When change is upon us, it matters how we respond. Due to excellent stewardship over the years, GPPA is fortunate to be in a strong position to act as a responsible community member. GPPA will be holding a spring networking and social event on May 8th (an invitation will be arriving very soon). A charitable donation to the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank will serve as the entrance fee. Strengthening community resources and increasing business and social contacts are the goals. I hope to see many of you at this important event.

How to Help People Effectively Handle Layoffs

Rex P. Gatto, Ph.D.

Mickey Gatto, M.Ed.

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When people are laid off, they go through a number of emotions: surprise, anger, denial, rejection, and hopefully in time, acceptance. You may recognize this process as similar to the Kubler-Ross stages of grief (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance). If you encounter such clients, you will find that their natural first reaction is to ask, "Why me, what did I do wrong?" and come to the conclusion that "I did nothing wrong." Then anger sets in, and the displaced person, in these tumultuous times, may focus on the greed of the leaders and the millions of dollars taken out of organizations that caused the economic decline. To focus on anger indefinitely does not help. A worker needs to learn to accept that a layoff is a change in employment status and move on. Of course, this is easier said than done. The period of cognitive distortion is manifested by such statements as "This should not have happened at all," or "Everything the organization did was course. Allow your clients a few days to indulge in the "poor me" mind set.

Once anger and rejection toward the company dissipates, the lack of employment can become simply a period of transition. To arrive at this point, the unemployed worker must create a new mental process by reframing the event: "This is what I am experiencing now, these are the emotions that I am feeling now, but I also realize that I have a great deal of talent. I have confidence within myself to be successful and I will move on to a new position." The person needs to be aware of his own emotions, but shouldn't excessively indulge in those emotions. The stage of acceptance can now begin.

Frustration results from the cognitive appraisal of the situation, but these negative thoughts need to transition to positive thoughts and developmental acceptance. Once the person reaches the acceptance stage, making a commitment to oneself can be anticipated. The commitment to find another job is the positive response to this negative situation. This commitment includes having the confidence to write a new resume, network effectively, present positively in an interview, and accept another position. Ask your client what has been learned through this work and layoff experience. What opportunities from past positions can be utilized in other

jobs or used to one's benefit? What training was received and certifications attained? What opportunities are available to network? All of these questions can be very beneficial for laid-off workers to clarify and balance their emotions. People in such situations must learn to accept where they are. Acceptance doesn't mean agreeing with the way people ran the organization, or agreeing with the termination. It means to understand oneself, to be aware of emotions, to be in control of emotions, and to be ready to move on and begin a new position.

To help your clients find a new position, you can suggest the following techniques. Have your clients buy a notebook and begin keeping a journal outlining all the actions that they will take. Action topics could be a list of networking organizations and identification of key people with whom to network. Write dates, places and people in the journal. Locate the appropriate professional organizations in which to network. Look, for example, at the Chamber of Commerce, the Lions or Rotary Clubs. Go to professional organization lunches at places such as engineer clubs, High Tech Council, or Human Resource Management organizations. Ask them to look at the newspapers or Business Times and find various ways to professionally network and put this in the journal. Ensure your clients become more active and don't let them fall into disengagement during this emotionally chaotic time of unemployment. Challenge your clients to maintain a positive attitude about themselves, the present situation, their families, the workplace, and the future.

Finding a job is a job in itself. To begin the actual job search process, your clients can write in their journal all the talents that they demonstrated in past positions. Many people do not realize that their job title, for example, engineer, administrator or salesperson, does not solely nor adequately define their skills. Clients should look at all the skills that they actually demonstrate. Some of these skills could include putting presentations together, creating PowerPoint, leading meetings,

facilitating, asking questions, advising, coaching, mentoring, phone skills, networking skills, the ability to build trust, and systematically asking the right questions. Those are all skills that stay with people regardless of a position, if they have confidence in themselves to effectively verbalize and utilize those skills. Simulate an interview with clients and prep them to say things such as, "what I have learned in my last job" or "I am looking for a position that will challenge me."

As a clinician coach, your job is to help your client regain confidence within themselves and carry themselves in a very positive light. People want to work

with positive people, not with people who blame or are immature in anyway. People caught in the economic, emotional, and changing work climate of the day will greatly benefit from your support, wisdom, and coaching.

Legislation in Progress

Arnold Freedman, Ph. D.

Chair, Legislative Committee
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HEALTHCARE ISSUES-FEDERAL

The economy is dominating legislative action on both the state and federal levels. It is so bad that it is doubtful that mental health parity could have passed in the current legislative atmosphere. Fortunately, it did pass and will go into effect by January 2010 (for some policies it may go into effect as early as October 2009). This will ensure equality in deductibles, co-pays and annual limits. A detailed analysis by PPA suggests that this will increase outpatient utilization about 10%. However, the cost projections are that it will increase actual health care costs far less than 1%. This is because outpatient psychotherapy acts to reduce the need for higher level care such as partial, residential, or inpatient treatments. Also, it reduces the need for medication, which is a growing portion of the overall mental health budget. Managed care procedures, such as outpatient authorizations, are still permitted even under mental health parity.

Congress also just passed a law dealing with safeguarding the transmission of healthcare information. This law has been in the works for some time. APA and PPA have been advocating for protecting information transmission and balancing the benefits of transmitting information electronically and efficiently versus the need to protect the privacy of patients and providers. Our professional organizations generally feel that the legislation will be beneficial.

SAVE THE DATE

**2009 GPPA
Spring Social and
Artistic Event**

**A Fundraiser for the Greater
Pittsburgh Community Food
Bank**

When: Friday May 8th, 2009 from
6-9 PM

Where: Society for Contemporary
Crafts in the Strip District

Cost for the event: By donation
Food and wine will be served

An artist will demonstrate and involve
each of us in making a hand-turned
professional wooden pen.

The art exhibit at that time will be
"Beyond Shared Language:
Contemporary Art and the Latin
American Experience"

RSVP to Dr. Hammond Holtz at
katieholtz@verizon.net by Thursday
April 30th

A registration form will be arriving in
your mailbox soon.