

How to Help People Effectively Handle Layoffs

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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 Kübler-Ross death and dying process (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, focuses on the greed of the leaders and the millions of dollars taken out of organizations that caused the economic decline. To focus on that 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 manifested by such statements as "This should not have happened at all," or "Everything the organization did was wrong" needs to run its course. Once the cognitively distorted period that supports anger and rejection of 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." People need to be aware of their own emotions, but shouldn't excessively indulge in those emotions. The stage of acceptance can now begin. Frustration results from the emotions of the situation but those negative thoughts need to transition to positive thoughts and developmental acceptance.

Once the person reaches the acceptance stage, having a

commitment for oneself can be anticipated. The commitment to find another job is the positive response to this negative situation. The commitment to having the confidence within oneself to write a new résumé, network effectively, present positively in an interview, and accept another position can begin. The commitment is to look at the situation in a positive light and ask 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 best benefit? What training was received and certifications attained? What opportunities were available to network? All of these thoughts can

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Two Federal Health Care Bills Already Pass Congress

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SCHIP signed into law in January



Great news for children's mental health! Congress took final action and the president signed into law an expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The Senate approved the bill on January 29 by a 66-32 vote, and the House had passed the measure January 14 by a 290-135 margin. Senator Arlen Specter and Senator Robert Casey Jr. voted in favor of the bill. All Pennsylvania

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be very beneficial for laid-off workers to correct and balance the emotional relationship within themselves. 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, be aware of emotions, be in control of emotions, and be ready to begin a new position with self-development thoughts, and then move on.

Allow your clients a few days to indulge in the "poor me" mindset. Then, 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 to keep in a journal 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 councils, or human resource management organizations. Ensure your clients become more active: don't let them fall into disengagement during this emotionally chaotic time of being laid off. To engage is most important at this juncture. Ask them to look at the daily newspapers or Business Times and find various ways to professionally network and put this in the journal. Challenge your clients to maintain a positive

attitude about themselves, the present situation, and the future. Finding a job is a job in itself. It is vital that clients create a positive attitude about themselves, the future, their families, and the workplace, and maintain confidence within themselves to find a job.

To begin the actual job search process, your clients can write in the journal all of 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 of the skills that they actually demonstrate. Some of the skills could include putting presentations together, creating PowerPoint, holding meetings, 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 clients 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 any way. People caught in the economic, emotional, and changing work climate of the day will greatly benefit from your support, wisdom, and coaching through this chaotic devastation. ❧

Electronic Election Coming Up: Member Number Needed

This month PPA will conduct its elections for president-elect, treasurer, and the chairs of the Communications Board, Internal Affairs Board, and School Psychology Board by an online service. **To vote, members will need their member number, which is on the address label of this journal.** Members will receive the ballots by e-mail in April, so please make sure that e-mails from PPA are not in your spam filter. Members for whom we do not have an e-mail address will still receive paper ballots. Other state psychological associations that have done this have shown not only a cost savings in terms of printing, mailing, and staff time, but increased participation in the elections. We are hoping this experiment shows the same results. ❧

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other than English does not exist or that books and journals published in other languages are in some respect inferior or irrelevant. In fact, clinical and research publications continue to be published in as many as 25 other languages. Clinically relevant information in particular is likely to be published in vernacular, for local consumption. If this body of information is disregarded, as it is most of the time, American psychologists collectively run the risk of glossing over a lot of potentially pertinent and useful data.

Fortunately, there are a sizeable number of Pennsylvania psychologists with substantial second or multiple language skills who typically use them in providing services to clients when needed. Rarely, however, do they make use of the languages they know in order to keep up with the professional literature in those languages. I would like to invite them to do so and to share what they learn in this manner with the psychological community, through journals and at conferences, workshops or other venues. In this manner, yet another barrier that separates us from portions of the world psychological community will be scaled. ❧

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