

You just got laid off, now what?

Five steps to getting back on your feet

Whether you are a recent grad, close to retirement or somewhere in between, getting laid off is stressful. And, during times of economic upheaval, the challenge is even greater.

So, after your initial panic, what can you do to help get yourself back in the job market?

1. Dust off your resume and update it. What can you do to make your resume stand out from all the others in a good way? You may need to seek advice from professionals or use readily available resources on the internet. Create a resume template you can individualize for each position you are seeking and to conform to the company's format.
2. Network. The old adage "it isn't what you know but who you know" still applies. Don't lock yourself into the way it's always been done. Try non-traditional methods to network. Use the internet and social networking sites. LinkedIn and Facebook have job related networking options. Does your professional association have networking opportunities? Who do you know? Don't burn your bridges, you may need them later.
 - a. Don't forget informational interviews. This is a way to set you apart from others. Many positions are not advertised. What better way to create name recognition when you do apply or to market yourself.
 - b. Volunteer. This is a great way to get experience and make connections.
 - c. Internships/Externships. Another way to build experience and network. With an internship/externship you are in an ideal position to move into a more permanent position. What better way to interview for a job you want than while doing a similar job!
 - d. Temp jobs. This is similar to an internship/externship. If you do a good job, you might be offered a permanent position when one comes available. It is cheaper for the company to hire from within than to have to recruit for the position.
3. Think about your options. Is this an opportunity to do something different or focus on another part of your current field? Have you been looking at a career change? This can be an ideal time to go back to school so that you are ready when the economy picks up. What will give you the edge over others? There are many financial aid opportunities in addition to loans and some include living expenses. Your recently departed employer may also have a re-training option in your severance package. Have you contacted your local college or university to discuss options?
4. Look at your budget. What is really necessary and what is fluff? Reduce unnecessary expenditures. This will help in the long run by keeping your debt low. Consider talking

with a debt counselor (always check to make sure you are talking with a legitimate resource) who can help you examine your options.

5. Exercise, eat right and breathe. During times of stress, it is very important to also take care of yourself. This will help you to focus on the task ahead and help you present a strong image to potential employers. Exercise helps to reduce stress and prevent additional problems that can arise from the stress itself.

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Karen Langer has her M.Ed. in Counseling & Guidance from the University of Arizona. After a number of years as a clinician, Clinical Supervisor and Executive Director for a community mental health agency in Arizona, Karen has spent the last 10 years as the Counseling Center Director and Adjunct Faculty for City University of Seattle. As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in Washington, Karen served on the Board of the Washington Mental Health Counselor's Association (WMHCA) as Graduate Liaison, President-elect, President and Past President before moving on to positions with the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA). Karen currently serves as the Western Region Director for AMHCA.

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