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YOU NEED THE OXYGEN FIRST!

Coping with a Job Layoff

By Sharon McCormick

Help your clients cope with a job layoff with some practical steps that will help them place their needs first during this transition.

Do you remember hearing the instructions airline staff tells passengers in case of an airplane emergency landing? Take oxygen first before administering it to one's children. I assumed the children would need oxygen first. After I thought about those instructions, I realized how much sense they make. The same principles apply when one has been through a lay off from work. I want my clients to protect themselves, and to think of themselves first. Towards that end, here are some very practical steps from a Career Counselor to help you manage this transition, instead of reacting to it.

- ✓ **YOU NEED THE OXYGEN FIRST!** Think about what you need and want and schedule these activities to take care of yourself first. You have a right to do what you need to do to cope in your own way. *I encourage my clients to write down what they want and need as soon as possible. I want them to schedule their time as it is very hard to go from working full-time to suddenly having no responsibilities whatsoever.*
- ✓ **SCHEDULE IN TIME FOR YOURSELF EVERYDAY** to make the space to address this change, and to cope with the shock. You are opening the door for any thoughts or feelings to surface. Just one hour a day can go a long way in helping you recover and heal emotionally. *I like to advise my clients to be respectful of that change and honor themselves in a way, by clearing some time to cope with it. Write about it, scream about it, work it off at the gym, or watch a favorite T.V. show, talk to a supportive*

White Paper Summary

- Think of yourself first
 - Take time for yourself - daily
 - Help family & friends help you
 - Feel free to set boundaries
 - Preserve your cash
 - Make money from hobbies
 - Don't lose sight of who you are
 - Keep your hopes and dreams alive!



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friend, whatever they think is best. There are no right or wrong coping methods in this situation.

- ✓ **HELP FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO HELP YOU.** Your family and friends will want to barrage you with their ideas, advice, career myths and stereotypes. They think it is what they need to do to help you. Set limits with "job loss" discussions. Don't get caught up in the "ain't it awful talk" as it will become a habit and when people see you, they will equate you with this "awful thing." Instead, put people to work around you and ask them to identify job leads for you. They do want to help you so facilitate their being productive in a positive, proactive way. *One client's mother identified a job lead from the newspaper, which her son never read, and told him about it. He applied, got the job, and he has gone on to another similar and larger company for even more pay and benefits. He would have never thought to apply for that job as it was in a completely different field. Tough times call for new approaches.*
- ✓ **FEEL FREE TO SET BOUNDARIES WITH PEOPLE.** Tell well-meaning friends and family that you don't wish to discuss the layoff right now, if you don't, and that you will be ready to speak about it in a week or two weeks and stick to that to protect your peace of mind and mental health. *A client I told me how his family called him everyday and gave him conflicting advice. "Call every company out of the phone book and take anything!" "Only apply to companies in person!" "Send the Human Resource people a pizza!" None of these approaches motivated him. He was still in shock about being laid off, and didn't have the energy to pursue these things at that time. These conversations were draining him further, and he avoided answering the phone at all. I encouraged him to set limits with callers. Eventually he was ready to talk about the layoff with them.*
- ✓ **PRESERVE YOUR CASH!** If you are financially supporting anything or anyone right now that can wait, call and talk to



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them about your need to preserve your money right now. *One client I have is so thoughtful, that when I asked her how much income she needed additionally each month to pay her bills and have peace of mind, she said "About \$700." When we went over her expenses, she stated that she was paying church tithes and sending money to her 26-year old son who was working full-time and taking college classes. We generated practical options that she could impliment immediately. Serious budget choices that reflect your priorities come first.*

- ✓ **MAKE MONEY FROM YOUR HOBBIES.** What about your hobbies that you never had time to pursue while working? Dog walking, photography, selling items on E-bay, think about what you love and turn it into gold. One of my clients, a construction worker, builds beautiful furniture and is now selling that part-time online.

- ✓ **START TO REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE AND YOUR OWN HOPES AND DREAMS.** It is time to reconnect with you-you are so much more than an employee. Leave some time to daydream and free-associate about what you want to do in your life. This is something you have control over, and you might be surprised at what you find. *One of my clients was turned down for yet another job as a writer, and was understandably very frustrated. During our session, we discovered that she loves flowers. She decided to apply for positions in a floral shop as a result, and found a job right by her house for the exact amount of money she would have made at the writing job. Now she gets exercise, is learning a new skill, meets people and she can write about floral arrangements on her new blog.*

These are just some examples of practical steps you can give to your clients during these difficult times.

Sharon McCormick is a Master Career Counselor through NCDA and she has a passion for promoting people's



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potential! In private practice as a Career Counselor for 15+ years, she bridges the gap between candidates and companies by expertly quantifying a job candidate's value and speaking to real HR / Hiring Manager needs. Sharon is an HR Specialist for a Federal Agency where she helps top leaders achieve promotions in the Senior Executive Service Corps. She is a Career Author, Consultant, Speaker, Trainer and Volunteer who develops and teaches career and workplace classes locally at Duke University, The University of Chapel Hill and Meredith College. She is a contributing career and workplace Internet author and her resumes have been published in national resume books. She can be reached at careertreasure@gmail.com and her website is: www.careertreasure.com.