



Layoff survivors: How to do more than survive

A job provides a sense of belonging, security and identity. In fact, many people define themselves by what they do for a living. Attachment to a job is accompanied by feelings of control, known expectations and loyalty. A threat to job security threatens much more than loss of income.

One doesn't have to personally experience losing his or her job to understand the traumatic effects of layoff on those who have been let go. A layoff affects every employee in some way. Those who remain may also experience loss. Maybe they feel the loss of co-workers they have grown close to or the loss of the perception of a secure, predictable and benevolent work environment.

Layoff survivors may also feel guilty about seeing people they really care about lose their job while they keep theirs. They may worry and wonder what will happen to those who left and may also struggle with:

- Wondering when and if there will be another round of layoffs, even after learning that their job is "safe." Employees who leave (willingly or unwillingly) are at least free to start fresh and move on with their lives.
- Thinking that their future options for advancement and pay increases could be limited and are uncertain.
- Suddenly becoming uncomfortably aware of the skill areas that they need to further develop and their importance to the company.
- Worrying about making mistakes that could jeopardize their current employment.
- Feeling fearful of taking days off.
- Taking on extra duties: working harder and faster.
- Changes in their concentration, mood, motivation, morale, commitment and productivity.

In short, we grieve the loss of the way things were, and typically feel stress about an uncertain future.

Tips that may help.

Here are some things you can do that may help keep things in perspective.

Ask yourself:

- I've been through change before; what have I learned that can help me now?
- Who in my life can I turn to for support?

Some people find that repeating certain positive phrases to themselves helps them to accept change more easily. For example:

- This is only temporary; it will pass.
- Change is an opportunity for growth.

Get regular exercise:

- Make sure to check with your doctor before starting a new program or increasing your activity level.
- Exercise may have a calming effect that lasts long after you stop exercising.
- Exercise can stimulate the release of chemicals in the brain called endorphins, which reduce depression and stress.

Eat right:

- What you eat can directly affect the way you feel.
- Limit your intake of caffeine.
- Eat smaller portions: you'll be able to digest your food more easily.
- Resist the temptation to turn to alcohol and drugs.

Get proper sleep:

Most adults need about 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night.

Practice relaxation techniques:

- Scan your body, looking for tension.
- At each tense place, take a deep, full breath and imagine the tension being swept away as you exhale.
- Repeat a relaxing phrase to yourself (e.g., I feel peaceful and still).

Get the support of others:

- Let those close to you know that you're adjusting to a difficult change.
- Seek professional help if the effects of stress interfere with your ability to function normally.

Contact Here4TN today.

If you need support after a layoff or want tips on how to help other employees, we're here to help. **Call 855-Here4TN or visit Here4TN.com.** We'll connect you with a counselor who can help you deal with this and other personal or work-related issues.

Note: If stress is overwhelming and you're having thoughts of suicide or harming others, seek help right away. If you feel there is an immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

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**We're here to help.
Call any time.**

Simply call:

855-Here4TN
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