

DEALING WITH JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT STRESS



When dealing with a tragedy or a crisis like death, divorce or job loss, most of us experience some version of the five traditional stages of grief. Recognizing these stages and understanding your thought processes can help you cope and deal with your emotions and move towards acceptance, which is essential for a successful job search.

DENIAL

Denial functions as a buffer, initially protecting you from strong emotions, such as anger, and allowing you to continue functioning. When you're in this stage, you're

emotionally rejecting the loss to protect yourself. Denial might be insisting that an employer will reconsider, or that the loss is only temporary. Initially, you may believe that the layoff is just a rumour or a mistake.

ANGER

You will recognise that denial cannot continue and once reality sinks in, it's natural to feel angry about losing your job. You might be angry with your employer, your former co-workers, the economy, or yourself. People around you find you getting angry without any apparent reason. You might ask yourself or people close to you "Why me? It's not fair" or "How can this happen to me?" or "Who is to blame?" or "Why would this happen?" This is the time to look for support.

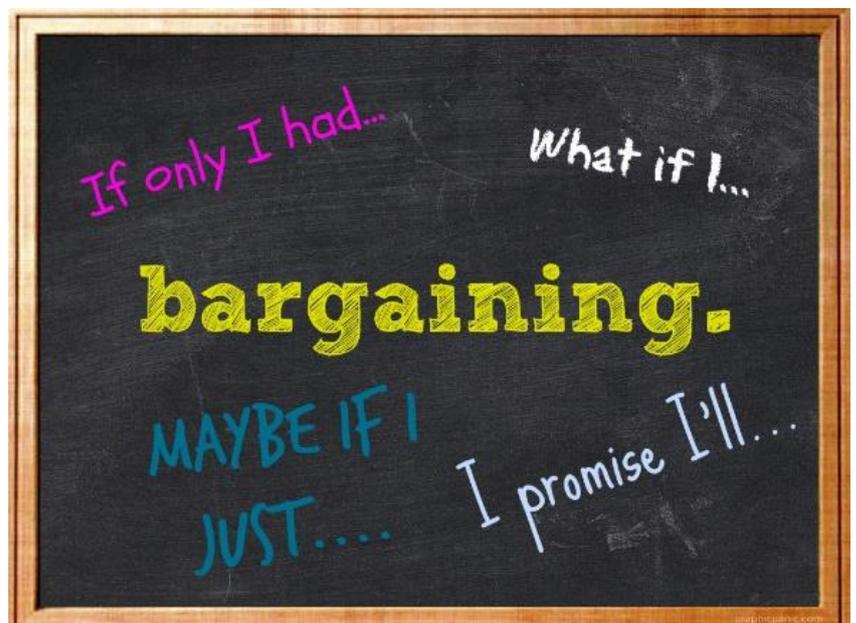
Surround yourself with family and friends who understand your challenge. Perhaps seek professional counselling or guidance from your religious leader, etc. Of course, you want to make sure this support is productive. If your venting turns into dwelling, this can be counter-productive.

Once you reach the point where your outward anger subsides, you start to move into the next stage.

BARGAINING

The third stage involves the hope that you can avoid losing your job by negotiating with your former employer, for instance: "I'd give anything to be back—work hard, take up the shift that I always avoided or even work under the manager that I hated." Or "If only he'd give back my job, I'd promise to stay focused and perform better." Or "Maybe if I promised to work longer hours, they'll give me my job back."

Like any of these stages, it's important to experience bargaining so you can move past it. However, when you're in this stage, you're often really hard on yourself, and that can be harmful to your self-esteem and you make yourself feel unnecessarily guilty.





DEPRESSION

The next phase is depression and sadness. Usual thoughts at this time are: "There is no meaning in working hard for organisations like this. There is nothing to look forward to. It'll be really tough to find anything, I feel like giving up. What's the point in putting up a fight and, after all, what am I fighting for?"

Acknowledge your right to feel miserable, you're a human being and you have a right to feel unhappy and you need to give your emotions space to exist. It's important to experience this stage, but it isn't pleasant. A few things can help you get through it:

Draw on your anchors and your support and think about the positive contributions you've made in the past, and will make again, e.g.: to keep your confidence intact, think about every job you've had, then ask yourself three questions:

- What did I accomplish / achieve / get done? What am I proud of?
- What did I learn about myself or what new skills did I learn?
- Who did I help and how?

Once you have a few things on your list, pick out the ones you're most proud of and then write about it. This will uplift you and help you to stay positive.

Also, plan and stick to a daily routine as it will give you direction and purpose. It forces you to put your nose to the grindstone and look for work. Part of your routine should also include a few hobbies you didn't have time for when you were working, and that's a nice reprieve. Volunteering can also help give you a sense of purpose and can be useful for networking, too.

(Financially, you also want to make the right money moves after a job loss: build an emergency budget, call your creditors, look for assistance, and so on.)

ACCEPTANCE

Finally, of course, there's acceptance. You understand what happened, you've experienced it, and you're functioning through it. One thing to keep in mind with acceptance is to make sure you're not forcing it. The best way to know if you are truly over your job loss and in the stage of acceptance is if you can talk about the experience with:

- Objectivity: you can state the facts without adding emotional commentary.
- Accountability: you can take ownership of your role in what lead to your job loss.

You don't have to feel great about your job loss – when you get to this point the job loss will still have been a rotten experience, but eventually a calmness sets in, and you start to feel a lot more in control about not being control. You tell yourself: "It's going to be okay. There is no point fighting it anymore and I may as well prepare for something new, possibly even better." This is when the job search is really ready to begin. (For assistance follow the link <https://view.publitas.com/sdds-web-design/a-guide-for-all-job-seekers/> to find the RS Recruitment step-by-step work search guide for all job seekers.)

These 5 stages make up the normal cycle most of us experience after the loss of a job. In order to accept your job loss, it's important to experience whatever emotions arise. You can, however, manage them and make sure you don't get stuck in any particular phase during the process.

