

## **Dealing with Unemployment and Pending Unemployment**

There are two ways that individuals become unemployed. There is the proverbial, unexpected pink slip that seems to come from nowhere, and then there is the long wait for the possible or probable layoff. A generation ago when someone was competent, conscientious, and worked hard they could expect to work somewhere for 30 years or so, get a gold watch and spend their golden years in comfort and peace. This generation is experiencing massive corporate downsizing and small business failures every day. There are difficulties and challenges that come with both the long awaited layoff and the sudden loss of a job.

When it is unexpected and suddenly your boss gives you a two week notice, there is shock, denial, anger, and a sense of loss. These symptoms are similar to the stages that someone experiences when they deal with any grief, such as death of a loved one. You might have a sense of unreality and disbelief. Surely, your employer must have been mistaken. You feel struck down, attacked. Maybe you're angry with yourself for not seeing any signs of this coming. Panic comes over you and you fear the worst. Maybe you'll lose your home, have to sell your car, or maybe you'll be forced to file for bankruptcy. You could experience a sinking feeling or maybe a flurry of panic and doom. Anger is a normal part of this process and can cause you to be rageful and stuck, or it can mobilize you into action.

That anger and all the other stages are somewhat different if the layoff is long expected. You have a long time to think about it and the wait for it carries a dread which can take on a life of its own. There is time to prepare for this, tighten up the budget, polish your resume, or begin the application process. But the waiting can seem endless, and sometimes the "not knowing" can be worse than the actual layoff. The pending possibility can catapult you into a merry go round of "what ifs". Sure, you know not to think about planning that vacation you have dreamed about, don't extend your credit, and tighten up all your expenses. But these fears are more dreadful because so much seems out of your control. You might feel like a puppet on a string, not able to direct your future. You wonder whether to hang on to this job as long as possible or to go on to some unknown company that might be worse than this one.

First of all, recognize your feelings and know that all of this is normal. If you don't allow yourself to express your feelings they get all bottled up and you will experience a stress reaction such as headaches, or illness. Talk to a friend or

counselor about it and then you will be less likely to snap at those around you. You may feel more touchy and moody, so this is the time to be extra careful to not vent your emotions on your family. It's true that we often hurt the ones we love, so be aware that what you are feeling is because of the circumstances of unemployment and not because of something your spouse did. Your spouse is going through their own struggles with the unemployment so this can be a time when both of you will have negative reactions that you wouldn't typically have.

Unemployment doesn't happen to an individual, but it happens to the entire family. Your spouse and children are all affected by the economic downturn in the family resources. Know that this can be a time of stress, but it can be an opportunity to grow closer as well. When a family has a conflict it must solve they can learn to work together and achieve mutual solutions to the situation. This can be a time to work on your other family strengths. By making the effort to be more thoughtful with each other, you can improve the family communication and bonding experience.

Children can be taught about economizing and can work with parents on ways to save money. You can incorporate lasting values in your teenage children by encouraging them to work in order to purchase some of the things they want. Many kids in our society believe that money is easy to obtain and are given many privileges. When money is tighter you don't include the children in adult budget decisions, but you set limits with what your children can purchase and teach them a valuable lesson.

If there are existing family or couple conflicts they can become worse during times of unemployment. Stress can be cumulative and already difficult situations can be magnified. This is a time to prioritize and work on things that need attention, and maybe let some lesser problems remain for a while. That doesn't mean that if you ignore a problem that it will go away, but you can only work on one problem at a time. Decide which issues are most pressing and address those first.

The stress that you experience during times of unemployment are very real and can be significant. This increases with longer periods of unemployment. Reducing stress and increasing your relaxation response will help deal with the effects in your life. There are several ways to successfully achieve more relaxation such as prayer, progressive relaxation, diaphragm breathing techniques, and cognitive restructuring. It is important to eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep. Try to keep a regular schedule by getting up and going to sleep at the same time each day.

This will help reduce fatigue, and improve concentration. Eating healthy consistent meals will help regulate your blood sugar levels and give you enough energy to meet the day's challenges. Moderate exercise will improve your mood, decrease anxiety, increase self esteem, and boost your immune system.

It is important to remain focused on your goals that will help achieve successful employment, and to not take on extra challenges at this time. Doing volunteer work might take your mind off of your situation, but it won't be helpful if you do this to avoid the job searching process. Make a list of weekly goals and daily goals to network and pursue employment, and then give yourself little rewards along the way to keep motivation up. Make a list of little things that you enjoy doing and don't cost a lot of money. Then each time you work hard and do something on your list treat yourself to one of the rewards

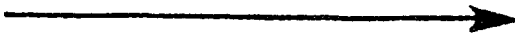
Times of unemployment can cause marital conflict and greatly increase already existing problems. Try to focus on your partner's strengths during this time and make an effort to be extra kind to one another. As a problem or issue comes up express your feelings with love. Stick with one issue at a time and be considerate and mindful of how your spouse might receive it. If daily fighting and insurmountable arguments prevail, then it might be necessary to get professional help. Look for a counselor who deals with marital conflict resolution and sees people on a sliding scale.

When you or your spouse is unemployed it is normal to feel sad or angry at times. However, if you have several days where it is difficult for you to get up out of bed in the morning, or you feel overly sad or hopeless, you may be experiencing clinical depression. Clinical depression is a physical condition which can thwart your best efforts to seek employment. You might feel helpless, edgy, and have low energy. You want to isolate yourself and it's difficult to perform simple tasks. At this point professional help is needed. Studies have shown that the most effective method of dealing with clinical depression is with a combination of medication and therapy.

During difficult times such as unemployment it is helpful to have a support system in place. Having friends that are encouraging and upbeat can help lift your spirits and motivate you to keep working towards your goals. Family, friends, and other church members can come beside those who are hurting and provide support. If the depression or need is severe then it might be helpful to consult with a counselor to get professional help.

Times of unemployment are difficult, but with planning and support **it** doesn't have to be a time of failure. Keep working towards your goals and be assured that perseverance that is well guided will pay off. This can be a time when God seems distant and uncaring. I have found God to be an extremely compassionate and caring solace when I have been hurting. Know that when you turn to Him that He will listen and He is always available.

# SELF-ESTEEM

LOW / WEAK  HIGH / STRONG

## INTERNAL SOURCE

Based on external  
Looks, money  
What others say  
How others treat you

Based on internal  
Every person has value  
What you say about yourself  
How you treat yourself

## UNIQUE TALENTS PACKAGE

Unawareness of own talents  
Compares self to others  
Competes with others  
Goal: I win - you lose

Knows own talents  
No comparing to others  
Cooperates with others  
Goal: I win - you win

## POSITIVE FOCUS

Focuses on negative in self  
Puts self down  
Focuses on negative in others  
Puts others down, is mean

Focuses on positive in self  
Affirms self  
Focuses on positives in others  
Affirms others, is kind

## PERSONAL INTEGRITY

Says but doesn't do  
Starts out, doesn't finish  
Dishonest  
Not trustworthy

Keeps word  
Completes what they start  
Honest  
Start and finish

## HUMANNESS

Must be perfect  
Blames others  
Holds grudges  
Resists change and growth

OK to make mistakes  
Admits own mistakes  
Forgives self and others  
Seeks change and growth

## *Let go ....*

*to "let go" does not mean to stop caring, it means I can't do it for someone else.*

*to "let go" is not to cut myself off, it's the realization I can't control another.*

*to "let go" is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences.*

*to "let go" is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.*

*to "let go" is not to try to change or blame another, it's to make the most of myself.*

*to "let go" is not to care for, but to care about.*

*to "let go" is not to fix, but to be supportive.*

*to "let go" is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.*

*to "let go" is not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes but to allow others to affect their destinies.*

*to "let go" is not to be protective, it's to permit another to face reality.*

*to "let go" is not to deny, but to accept.*

*to "let go" is not to nag, scold or argue, but instead to search out my own shortcomings and correct them.*

*to "let go" is not to adjust everything to my desires but to take each day as it comes, and cherish myself in it.*

*to "let go" is not to criticize and regulate anybody but to try to become what I dream I can be.*

*to "let go" is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future.*

*to "let go" is to fear less, and love more.*

## *Attitude*

*The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on our life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts.*

*It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home.*

*The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is attitude.*

*I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our Attitudes.*

*Charles Swindoll*

# Resolving Family Conflicts During Employment Crisis

Different Ways to Become Unemployed:

- When it's unexpected
- When it's long awaited

Stages of grief during times of unemployment

- Shock
- Denial
- Sense of loss
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Acceptance

How the different family members experience unemployment

- The spouse
- The children

Improving communication to deal with conflict

- "I" statements
- Feeling statements
- Preference versus demands
- Purpose statements

Taking good care of yourself

- Rest, eat well, and exercise
- Do something nice for yourself
- Practice relaxation
- Get support

Resolve marital conflict during times of unemployment

- Speak the truth with love



- Focus on your spouse's strengths
- Avoid blaming and look towards solutions
- Try solutions that have worked in the past
- Remind yourselves that this is a stressful time, so go easy
- Get professional help when necessary

Words like "ignored" express how we *interpret others*, rather than how we *feel*. Here is a sampling of such words.

abandoned	distrusted	put down
abused	interrupted	rejected
attacked	intimidated	taken for granted
betrayed	let down	threatened
boxed-in	manipulated	unappreciated
bullied	misunderstood	unheard
cheated	neglected	unseen
coerced	overworked	unsupported
co-opted	patronized	unwanted
cornered	pressured	used
diminished	provoked	

## CREATING A VOCABULARY FOR FEELINGS

In expressing our feelings, it helps to use words that refer to specific emotions, rather than words that are vague or general. For example, if we say, "I feel good about that," the word *good* could mean *happy, excited, relieved* or a number of other emotions. Words such as *good* and *bad* prevent the listener from connecting easily with what we might actually be feeling.

The following lists have been compiled to help you increase your power to articulate feelings and clearly describe a whole range of emotional states.

### How we are likely to feel when our needs are being met

absorbed	aroused	composed
adventurous	astonished	concerned
affectionate	blissful	confident
alert	breathless	contented
alive	buoyant	cool
amazed	calm	curious
amused	carefree	dazzled
animated	cheerful	delighted
appreciative	comfortable	eager
ardent	complacent	ebullient

ecstatic	helpful	radiant
effervescent	hopeful	rapturous
elated	inquisitive	refreshed
enchanted	inspired	relaxed
encouraged	intense	relieved
energetic	interested	satisfied
engrossed	intrigued	secure
enlivened	invigorated	sensitive
enthusiastic	involved	serene
excited	joyous, joyful	spellbound
exhilarated	jubilant	splendid
expansive	keyed-up	stimulated
expectant	loving	surprised
exultant	mellow	tender
fascinated	merry	thankful
free	mirthful	thrilled
friendly	moved	touched
fulfilled	optimistic	tranquil
glad	overjoyed	trusting
gleeful	overwhelmed	upbeat
glorious	peaceful	warm
glowing	perky	wide-awake
good-humored	pleasant	wonderful
grateful	pleased	zestful
gratified	proud	
happy	quiet	

### How we are likely to feel when our needs are not being met

afraid	ashamed	cool
aggravated	beat	cross
agitated	bewildered	dejected
alarmed	bitter	depressed
aloof	blah	despairing
angry	blue	despondent
anguished	bored	detached
annoyed	brokenhearted	disaffected
anxious	chagrined	disenchanted
apathetic	cold	disappointed
apprehensive	concerned	discouraged
aroused	confused	disgruntled

## SUMMARY

The second component necessary for expressing ourselves is feelings. By developing a vocabulary of feelings that allows us to clearly and specifically name our emotions, we can connect more with one another. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable by expressing our feelings can help resolve conflict. NVC distinguishes the expression of actual feelings from words and statements that describe those feelings, and interpretations.

disgusted	impatient	sad
disheartened	indifferent	scared
dismayed	intense	sensitive
displeased	irate	shaky
disquieted	irked	shocked
distressed	irritated	skeptical
disturbed	jealous	sleepy
downcast	jittery	sorrowful
downhearted	keyed-up	sorry
dull	lazy	spiritless
edgy	leery	startled
embarrassed	lethargic	surprised
embittered	listless	suspicious
exasperated	lonely	tepid
exhausted	mad	terrified
fatigued	mean	tired
fearful	miserable	troubled
fidgety	mopey	uncomfortable
forlorn	morose	unconcerned
frightened	mournful	uneasy
frustrated	nervous	unglued
furious	nettled	unhappy
gloomy	numb	unnerved
guilty	overwhelmed	unsteady
harried	panicky	upset
heavy	passive	uptight
helpless	perplexed	vexed
hesitant	pessimistic	weary
horrified	puzzled	wistful
horrible	rancorous	withdrawn
hostile	reluctant	woeful
hot	repelled	worried
humdrum	resentful	wretched
hurt	restless	