

10 Things People Won't Tell You When You Lose Your Job

You can wallow, or see your job loss as an opportunity for self-discovery.

By Ariane de Bonvoisin

The first 30 days after a job loss will no doubt be filled with fear, anxiety and impatience. You might hear experts talk about the importance of updating your resume, leaning on your network of contacts and even starting that hobby you always wanted to try. Here, Ariane de Bonvoisin, author of *The First 30 Days: Your Guide to Making Any Change Easier*, shares some tips for coping with a job loss that people won't necessarily tell you about.

1. Give yourself some real time to figure out your next step. That may mean weeks, not a few hours! Don't feel compelled to jump right back into the work force. You will feel some shock—the same way you would feel shock after any loss. Take some time to deal with that. When you *are* ready to jump back in, keep your options open. This might be a good time to explore a new field that you've always wanted to try but never had the time to, start a business, or go back to school.

2. The next job you take may be a transitional one. Whether it's full or part time, embrace it. Every experience is a valuable one and you never know where it may lead. It's OK to freelance or find part-time work to get some cash flow until you find the perfect new position. In fact, you may find that you don't need a full-time job as much as you thought you did to be happy and secure.

3. Look for companies, not jobs, and change the way you apply. Find companies with missions and values that you can get behind. Employers are much more interested in candidates who have a passion for the company than someone who is just looking for a paycheck. Remember, your resume and cover letter are not unique. With the huge number of layoffs today, there are likely to be many more people you have to compete against for a single position. You have to find new skills and new selling points in your abilities to highlight on your resume and your social networking pages.

Your reputation and your online persona play much more of a role in getting you a new job than your resume or your cover letter ever could. Your profiles on **Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn** should be spruced up and optimized as much as possible to make you as attractive as you can be to a potential employer. And don't forget to Google yourself to see what comes up.

4. Celebrate—maybe even take a vacation. You probably didn't take time away while you were at your last job—use this period of adjustment to break free. It'll give you a chance to get some perspective. Have drinks or a party and celebrate being laid off. Put a positive spin on this. Enjoy yourself. This will be one of the few times in life that you're unencumbered by work. Read. Sleep. Do all the things you never get to do...believe it or not, you'll miss this time when it's gone.

5. Use your health insurance while you still have it. I bet you haven't been taking care of yourself or haven't had the time. Get a full physical, go to the dentist. You can also explore meditation, acupuncture, or other complimentary therapies that can help you de-stress. Finding your next dream job is an endurance test and requires a lot of energy. Start eating well, do a cleanse, and go to the gym. Your energy and self-esteem will get a boost and this will be felt by everyone around you, including future employers.

6. Realize that something good will come from this (I call this The Change Guarantee). Write it down somewhere visible. In the end, this job loss is probably a good thing. Make yourself write a list of 3 things that help you see the upside from this downside. You'll end up better off, no matter what. You may not see it now, but you'll triumph over this job loss in ways you couldn't imagine.

7. Don't rehash the story, blame something or someone for the loss or explain it to everyone ad nauseam. Blame never accomplishes anything. Don't get addicted to your story: Why you got fired or how unlucky you are. It will hold you back. There is no shame or embarrassment to be had. Every successful person has lost a job at some stage. Instead of feeling shame, honor this as just a life change that will make you stronger. Stick around optimistic people, not victim circles. Ask yourself, "Who are you not thinking of that can help you?" And also, "Who is holding you back?"

8. Always frame things in the positive. Say things like "I'm excited I'm back in the job market. It has given me a chance to really go after a job that I love," as opposed to, "I recently got fired/lost my job." People who are optimists and have positive beliefs will always get through this change better than others.

9. **Let go of the way life should have gone.** Resisting the job loss causes more pain. Sometimes you know why you were fired, sometimes you just don't. Don't waste any time figuring it out. Be mature about anything you feel may have contributed to it. See the difference between reality and illusion (reality is you lost your job, illusion is you'll never find another job.) Take a moment to go inside yourself, get silent and listen to your intuition. Some of your best ideas will come when you slow down enough and tune in.

10. **Looking for a job is now your job.** It may take a lot longer to find a new job than you think it will. Many people are running out their unemployment benefits, taking six months or more to find a new job. You might have to settle for less. We're in a tough economic climate and the dream job you want might not be available for the next few years. Some jobs leave the market and never come back, and you may be facing that reality. Don't get discouraged. Remember, even in a bad economy, there are always jobs for good people.

8 Practical Things to Think About

1. Pull all your contacts and catalogue all those loose business cards. You never know. Something may spark an idea. Send them an email.

2. Get some blank business cards made with your name, email and contact information.

3. There are strict deadlines for Cobra and health insurance. Make sure you're aware of these. Too many people miss them.

4. Check out unemployment benefits, regardless of your situation or salary. You never know. There are many people who are eligible who never claim useful benefits.

5. Make sure visas and work permits are all in order if applicable.

6. See a financial advisor. Even if you can't afford to keep someone on retainer, most mutual funds and banks will give you a free consultation. Free websites like mint.com will help you keep track of finances as well.

7. Send a thank you note to your boss and colleagues that you enjoyed working with, and ask them to keep you top-of-mind if they hear of any positions you'd be right for.

8. Write down what you are looking for and what your intention is. Make your list. Read it every day. Intention is a very strong force.

- Ariane de Bonvoisin is the author of the book, *The First 30 Days: Your Guide to Making Any Change Easier* and the founder of www.first30days.com, a site dedicated to helping people through more than 60 different life changes.