

STANFORD UNIVERSITY FSHC

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Managing the Emotional Impact of a Layoff

What to expect?

Being laid off can be an overwhelming and stressful experience of loss and change. For some people a layoff could be a welcome relief from a difficult job situation or looked at as potential for moving on in their life. But for others a job loss can have a significant emotional impact. While people deal with change and stress in many different ways, the following is a short list of possible emotional, psychological and physical responses that one may experience:

Typical emotional reactions . . .

Anxiety - Shock/Disbelief - Irritability - Anger - Frustration - Resistance - Sadness – Fear – Loss of enjoyment or appreciation – Feelings of worthlessness – Loss of self esteem – Shame

Typical physical reactions . . . Fatigue – Headaches – Weight loss/ Gain – Sleep disturbance – Upset stomach – Muscle pain – Nausea

Are there positive coping mechanisms that are helpful?

- **Maintain supportive relationships** - Talk with friends and family and let important people in your life know what is going on. Accepting help and support from people who care about you and will listen to you can help a lot. Keeping secrets is very stressful and for most people having support and empathy is very helpful in moving through this emotional time.
- **Care of your body - Exercise** is an important antidote for stress. Being mindful about your eating and sleeping are important in trying to keep yourself functioning as well as possible.
- **Nurture yourself** – Do something everyday that helps you feel good. This is a time to be compassionate with yourself and to utilize stress reducing tools that help you to feel calm. You could try taking a walk, taking a warm bath, talking with someone you trust, meditating, praying, listening to music or anything else that helps you to feel relaxed.
- **Write** – Write down your ideas, thoughts and feelings. Writing can be a very useful way to vent negative feelings as well as clarify issues that you might be struggling with. Journaling, writing in letter form, even list making can help to keep your head clear.
- **Keep a positive mental attitude** – Stay aware of the messages that you are giving yourself. If you notice you are having self critical thoughts (e.g “I will never have a good job again”, “I feel worthless”), it is important to observe this and to tell yourself to stop doing it. These thoughts are unhelpful and make us feel worse. We can not always be in control of what happens to us – in fact, often how we handle what happens to us is the only thing we can control. Remember that nothing ever stays the same, and tell yourself “this too shall pass.” Rather, maintain a hopeful outlook and visualize what you want rather than worrying about what you fear.

How do I determine if professional help would be useful?

Feeling anxious and depressed, having trouble sleeping, not being able to enjoy activities that you are used to enjoying are all normal feelings that you may experience after a layoff. If these feelings persist over time it may be useful to be assessed by a doctor and or mental health professional. Layoffs can put a lot of emotional stress on relationships and it may be useful to consult with a mental health professional about this as well.

The Faculty Staff Help Center is a free benefit for all employees as long as they have Stanford benefits as well as Cobra. **We can be reached at 650-723-4577 or helpcenter.stanford.edu**