



Job Loss

Are you maintaining your momentum?

When we're faced with a sudden and unplanned change in our career, we can experience a myriad of emotions. Some can be motivating, whilst others can disable our ability to 'bounce back' and move forward in our job search. Understanding this potential cycle of emotions can help you to identify which stage of the transitional cycle you are experiencing and to explore coping strategies to enable you to maintain momentum.

There are five potential stages in the transitional cycle. Daniel's story below demonstrates some of these stages.

Feeling Dispensable

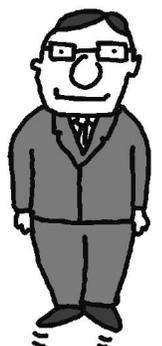
Immediately after receiving his notice of redundancy Daniel felt confused about his sudden job loss. He'd always felt he was a good employee and he couldn't understand why this had happened to him. Daniel was experiencing the first stage of the cycle-shock. He talked about feeling 'dispensable' and said he felt that the decision was somehow personal.

By talking through his feelings at this early stage, he began to see that it was only his job that had been made redundant, and that he was not redundant as a person. As a result, Daniel was not in this initial stage for long as he had allowed himself to experience his sense of loss. However he did move quite quickly to the second stage of the cycle- anger.

Channeling Your Anger

Daniel began to feel angry towards his organisation and his manager, but he was also beginning to turn his feelings of anger inwards as he became critical of himself and began to doubt his abilities. During this stage, he had lost sight of all of his successes and achievements as he began to only focus on the negative side of what had happened to him.

We implemented a plan of self-care strategies, which included social and sporting activities to help reduce his stress levels and growing loss of self-esteem. We also began to explore the potential opportunities that could be ahead for Daniel in his career. Both of these activities helped Daniel to channel his anger in a more positive way.



Focus on the Future

The third stage, which can follow anger, can be called the bargaining stage. Although Daniel did not experience this stage, it can be a time when we may attempt to reverse the decision that has been made by trying to influence the decision-makers in our organisation. If this strategy is unsuccessful we become more reflective as we begin to consider "What next?" Our focus turns to the future as we feel that this could be an opportunity for us to take a new career direction or pursue a long held dream.

Stress reduction techniques like the ones Daniel used during his anger stage can also help us during this phase too. However, as we begin to feel more positive about the future, we need to be mindful of how the next stage can challenge us in maintaining our momentum.

Keep motivated

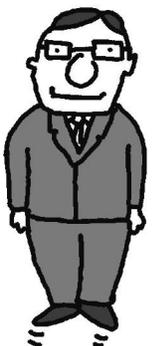
Having initiated his job search, Daniel began to experience what many of us have experienced during our job search phase. He talked about how delays and a couple of set-backs had left him feeling vulnerable and potentially unemployable. He was feeling frustrated, had begun to doubt himself again, was losing sleep and spending more time on his own. Recognising that his growing stress level and negative focus would not help him in his job search, we decided to review his self-care strategies.

Daniel decided to increase his sporting activities to help combat his stress, maintain his social network to avoid isolation and to increase his networking activities to source new opportunities and to keep him motivated. We also completed a skills audit to highlight his strength areas and began refining his 'work experience stories'. These activities supported Daniel through what can be a difficult and challenging time and helped to channel his energies where they needed to be – on his job search.

Get creative

It was easy to see when Daniel had entered the fifth and final stage – he had accepted his current situation and had become inspired and creative in his job search. He had developed a budget and with careful spending was able to give himself 4 months to find a new position. By overcoming his avoidance to look at his financial situation, he had relieved his concerns and was pleased to know that he had time to consider his options and find a role that he would really enjoy.

As a result of maintaining his self-care strategies he had also managed to keep a positive mindset and self-image, and had become quite creative in his job search. Soon after, Daniel started to receive a number of great opportunities and he realised that his redundancy, which had seemed such a negative event at the time, had actually become a catalyst to move him on to a new and more fulfilling career. A change which he might not have initiated himself.



Transitioning Through

Daniel experienced most of the five stages, but it was his awareness of what he was experiencing as it occurred, which enabled him to manage his emotions and to implement self-care strategies to help him maintain his momentum. This understanding also helped him to realise that what he was experiencing was indeed a 'cycle' and was not a permanent condition but rather a stage, which he would transition through.

It is strange how, when we experience stress in our lives, we often stop doing the things we enjoy the most – and yet it is these activities that will help us through what can be an uncertain and stressful time in our lives.

