

PSYCHOLOGIES

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Redundancy

Redundancy is a complex issue affecting more and more people, especially now. The days of a job for life are long gone, and in the current economic climate, it's increasingly likely that you'll know someone who has been made redundant at some time too.

If you are in the unfortunate position of being made redundant, it's hard not to feel upset and to take it personally even though it is the role that was made redundant, not *you*. However, there are some steps you can take to support yourself during a time of redundancy.

First Things First: Being Prepared

You'll need to get the details of your redundancy payment and package. Although you may be entitled to an attractive redundancy payout, these vary enormously so it's best to know in advance what your financial needs are. If you don't already do it, then start keeping an accurate record of what you spend and separate your expenditure between essentials (such as mortgage or rent), items that you might still need but could consider cheaper alternatives (such as haircuts or holidays) and those which are sheer luxury items that you could do without if you really needed to.

As redundancy can be fairly complex, a professional adviser can be helpful in explaining your rights and helping you to look at your financial options. You can also get advice on negotiating with your employer if you need it. You can seek redundancy advice from a number of bodies including professional associations, independent financial advisors and employment lawyers.

Make Your Last Impressions Count

It's important to keep reminding yourself that redundancy isn't personal, though of course its impact is very personal indeed. For some, the loss of a job involves something similar to grieving and you might expect to experience a combination of denial and anger before you reach acceptance. Take care not to direct any anger towards someone you need to maintain a relationship with – especially if you are someone who is prone to flying off the handle. Talk to a friend or partner and if you need to release your anger, take some exercise or spend some time hitting a pillow.

For others it may be a voluntary option to take redundancy and yet despite the relative degree of control these people have over their circumstances, making the decision can also create new stresses and the opportunity for self-doubt.

Typically, organisations will expect you to stay on and work out your notice period, or a part of it, before you leave. This may even be for as long as 3 months, depending on the terms of your employment and the redundancy, so there's plenty of opportunity to feel unappreciated or taken for granted. Notice the thoughts that create these feelings. They will influence your behaviour so it's important to recognise them and to consciously try to shift perspective to one that can have a more positive influence on you, for instance.....hard though it might be to remember sometimes, there will be many people staying after you leave, who feel bad that you're leaving and won't know how to act around you, or what to say, and that can put a strain on even the best of working relationships.

Working during this time will pass much more quickly and be more enjoyable if you are able to acknowledge that this will be an unusual period of time; so invite the people who continue to work with you to discuss the situation openly with you. Try not to jump to conclusions about what they may or may not be thinking. If the relationships were strong, they will be strong enough to be able to support a conversation to talk through what's happened. If you plan to stay in the same sector, the chances are you'll meet some of them again anyway and it's so much better to be remembered as someone positive and helpful. Since, you'll probably be asking some of these people to be referees and to help you network you into a new job, it definitely pays to stay as optimistic and productive as you can until your last day.

Boost Your Self-Esteem

Be sure to boost your own self-esteem too; pay particular attention to your physical and general wellbeing and be sure to include some de-stressing activity such as yoga or meditation.

If you've been fairly content in your role and been in the same place for a while, then the chances are that your CV needs some updating. Make a list of all your strengths and accomplishments – now is a good time to refresh your memory about all the good work you've done and the skills you've acquired. You can ask your line manager to help you with this too, especially if you haven't recently had a formal development meeting. As well as being valuable for updating your CV, keeping your list visible, for example, post-it notes of your talents and qualities around your bathroom mirror can provide positive affirmation each day.

Take All the Help You Can

Employers will often offer free careers guidance or 'outplacement' services. These can help you decide on your next move or provide practical support such as the use of an office, advice on preparing your CV and having some interview practice. Whatever they offer, do take advantage of it. If you're very senior, your outplacement may also include the services of a coach but if you are not offered these services by your employer, you can find a career coach privately who will help you to explore your options.

Build Your Networks

In addition to the usual ways of find out a new job (newspapers/magazines, internet, employment agencies, cold calling or speculative applications) networking is an important way of finding out about opportunities vacancies as the majority of jobs aren't advertised. This is especially true the more senior the role you're looking for. Networking is about letting as many people as possible know that you're seeking work. It's also about expanding your network to new people who may know other people with vacancies. The more people who know you're looking for work, the higher the chances will be that you'll hear of something.

The more people you interact with the more positive personal sponsorship you can develop so that these people will remember you when they hear of something. Make sure you're clear about the nature of the role you're looking for and what your key talents and skills are. Have some personal cards printed at a local high street printer so that you always have something to leave with the people you meet, and leave two cards – one for them and one to pass on. Networking clubs have grown enormously in the past few years so search for breakfast and lunch networking clubs in your area, or ask other people you know which ones they'd recommend.

Using Your Time Productively

Even if you don't get a job straight away, use your time constructively. If you're not working then aside from the time you spend looking, applying and interviewing you could do some studying-part-time or distance learning - to develop some new skills and continue your professional development. If you're considering a change of career you could work voluntarily to gain experience in a new area. As well as broadening your opportunities, you can add these onto your CV to demonstrate your proactive approach to your own learning and development

If you leave your employer before you have another role lined up, don't lose heart. Help to keep your morale up by:

- having some form of routine to your day and some goals so that you can still have a sense of achievement each day /week. E.g. the number of applications you write/ the number of agencies registered with
- networking and being around people. Use your trade association events or networking clubs to stay connected. Monday mornings can be challenging as you see everyone else start their working week, so if there aren't many clubs in your area, link up with others from your company who have been made redundant, or ask friends if they know of others and create your own informal 'breakfast club'.

Make every attempt to focus on creating a positive future rather than the past. Redundancy often presents opportunities too if we can be open to them.....

Finally, if you feel overwhelmed and think that talking to someone confidentially might help then you can speak to a counsellor. Your employer may provide one or you could search the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's database.

Suggested Reading:

Super Job Search: The Complete Manual for Job-Seekers and Career-Changers
Peter K. Studner

What Color Is Your Parachute?: A Practical Manual for Job-hunters and Career-changers Richard
Nelson Bolles

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