

SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING STRESS DURING A JOB SEARCH

By Barbara Safani, M.A., CERW, NCRW, CPRW, CCM
Career Solvers

Job loss ranks high on the list of most stressful situations. Many report going through a grieving process, similar to the stages people go through after the death of a loved one. Shock, denial, anger, and depression are all common reactions to the loss of a job. These emotions are important and you should acknowledge them. Unfortunately, some people become stuck in one of these stages and this is detrimental to a successful job search campaign. Below are seven strategies you can use to reduce stress and generate acceptance and enthusiasm during your search.

Maintain a Routine

Many job seekers report that creating routine alleviates stress during a job search. Keep the same schedule you had when you were working. Wake up at the same time and leave your house at the same time. Plan to be somewhere at 9 am. Go to the library to do research on a target company, plan a networking meeting, or go to a scheduled event.

Volunteer

When you volunteer you are doing something positive for a particular group or community. It allows you to channel your energy and develop focus. It is also a way to help others in need and it can help put your current situation in perspective. By volunteering, your name becomes known among the organization's members. Chairing a committee or event allows you to showcase your skills in a particular area or gain new skills that can enhance your overall job profile.

Keep a Journal

Keeping a record of your search and your personal thoughts regarding that journey is a good way to identify what's working and what is not working in your search. It can also be a very cathartic process and a private place for you to record your goals and dreams.

Create a Financial Plan

With a little bit of research and planning you may be able to reduce your financial burden after a job loss. Take the time to look at your finances, tally up your assets and set a plan for your future spending. Review any money coming in including unemployment benefits, severance package, and money from pension and retirement funds. Review expenses such as COBRA, rent, and food. Check out unemployment benefits and inquire if you qualify for any government assisted training through the Department of Labor. Job related expenses may be tax deductible, so check with an accountant. Schools and colleges may offer payment schedules and creditors may offer alternative collections options.

Communicate with your Family

If you don't talk about your search with a spouse or significant other, you could be creating additional stress in the relationship. When you shut a partner out of this conversation and carry on as if nothing has changed, that person may worry about the status of your search and your overall financial security. They may constantly seek you out for updates or offer recommendations on how you should conduct your search. This may feel like nagging to the job seeker and can cause tensions to mount. If your partner wants to understand your search strategy, try setting up a weekly meeting to discuss your search plans. Then agree that you will be given the "space" to carry out your plan.

Sometimes a job seeker's search is impeded by domestic responsibilities at home. Family members may ask you to do errands, chauffeur other family members to activities and appointments, or take on significant home improvement projects like painting the house. Keep in mind that if your job search is a part-time activity it will take you twice as long to find a new job.

Avoid Toxic People

We've all met them. They are the ones who say "It's brutal out there. I've been searching for months and no one is hiring." These people do nothing to help you in your search. They often have one-dimensional

strategies that result in unproductive, extended searches. Let these people know that you intend to stay positive or share a tip that's working for you. If their negative attitude continues, try, if it's realistic, to take a break from the relationship.

Find a Buddy

While it's wonderful to have the support of family and friends during a job search, having a buddy who is also seeking employment can provide great benefits to both parties involved. Find someone who is in a different profession or someone who is in the same profession, but at a more junior or more senior level, so you won't be competing for the same jobs. Having a buddy allows you to share similar concerns, boost morale, empathize with someone in the same situation, and share advice.

A job search presents a unique set of challenges for many people. But it is also a time when people discover new skills and even new careers. It can be a time to strengthen existing friendships and grow new relationships. By examining your emotions and channeling your energies in a positive direction, you can potentially decrease both your stress level and the amount of time you spend looking for a new job.

Barbara Safani, owner of Career Solvers, has over ten years of experience in career management, recruiting, executive coaching, and organizational development. Ms. Safani partners with both Fortune 100 companies and individuals to deliver targeted programs focusing on résumé development, job search strategies, networking, interviewing, and salary negotiation skills. She can be reached via email at info@careersolvers.com or by phone at 866-333-1800 / 212-579-7230.