

COPING WITH JOB LOSS

GOALS:

- To explore our reactions to losing a job.
- To gain insight into stages of job loss.
- To look at ways to cope.

RATIONALE:

Losing a job can unleash a wide range of emotions from shock to anger to devastation. Support gained from a group can help people explore their own situations and encourage them to develop coping strategies.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers.

METHOD:

Warm up: Strengths Bombardment

Ask each participant in turn to declare one of the following to the group:

Something I am good at is...
One of my strengths is...

Encourage group to acknowledge the person by applauding, cheering or verbal comments like "**good for you!**"

When everyone is finished ask participants how it felt to be supported and acknowledged.

Exercise 1: Feelings About Job Loss

Losing a job can be traumatic event in one's life. It can affect us in many ways. Divide the group into small discussion groups and ask them to consider the following questions. Indicate that a summary of the points will be presented to the large group.

Questions to consider:

- How did you feel when you lost your job? What was the initial feeling? How is it now?
- What did you do?
- What are you doing now?
- How is your self-confidence affected?

When all groups are finished ask for a discussion in the large group. Acknowledge where people have indicated similar answers. This may help to show that people do share similar issues/feelings and that they are not "the only one" to feel or think this way.

Theory: See Theory Box

Explain that there is a theory about stages of job loss which may help to give participants an understanding of this process. Stress that this is only to give some information and that not everyone will experience all of the steps.

Exercise 2: Stages of Job Loss

In small groups ask participants to consider how relevant the theory is for them. Can they relate to any of the stages.

In the large group ask if anyone would share their insights with the group. Inquire if there are questions about the theory.

Exercise 3: Developing Coping Techniques

Encourage group to brainstorm as many ideas as possible to help them cope with the effects of job loss. What are **bridges** they need to build?

Examples include:

- having positive, supportive people around.
- taking care of one's self (exercise, eating well)
- becoming a volunteer
- taking a course
- joining a job support program
- planning for job search (research, information interview)
- actively job searching
- looking at trends (what goods and services are needed - is there a place for me?)
- networking
- considering retraining opportunities
- practising positive self-talk (use affirmations)
- seeking counselling

Conclude with each person declaring to the group:

One thing I am going to do this week to cope more effectively is ...

EVALUATION:

REFERENCES:

Admunson, Dr. N., Borgen, Dr. W. ***At the Controls: Charting Your Course Through Unemployment*** Nelson Canada, Scarborough, Ontario, 1992. (ISBN# 0-17-601-997-9).

Handling Unemployment Groups Leaders' Manual, 2nd edition, Canadian Mental Health Association of Metropolitan Toronto, 1992.

CREDIT:

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THEORY BOX

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU'RE UNEMPLOYED? (AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTER)

Printed with permission from: Amundson, Dr. N, Borgen, Dr. W., *At the Controls: Charting Your Course Through Unemployment* Nelson Canada, Scarborough, Ont. 1992. ISBN # 0-17-601997-9.

Shock! Relief! Sadness! Excitement! Frustration! Lack of energy! Hopelessness! Determination! People feel many different emotions when they are out of work. These feelings may be a bit different from one person to another depending on how you lost your job, how long you have been out of work, and whether you can provide for your family or others who depend on you.

However, many unemployed people describe similar patterns of emotions. They describe these feelings as an "emotional roller coaster" that kept them off balance and made it hard for them to feel confident. Look at the "roller coaster" and see what others have experienced and compare it to your own experience. Looking at the whole roller coaster process may give you more confidence in handling the "ups and downs" and make you feel more in control.

JOB LOSS

- A. What Happened?
First negative reactions to job loss (Shock, anger).
- B. Leaving a Job/High School
Thinking about job loss (worry, sadness).
- C. High Hopes
Acceptance of the loss (determined, on top of things)
- D. Thinking about job search (hopeful, optimistic, proud)

JOB SEARCH

- E. First reactions to stress associated with job search (pressure, discouragement, fear, anger, desperation).
- F. Protection from job search related stress (apathy)
- G. Turning the rejections inside (feeling worthless, isolated, lonely, drifting).
- H. At this point, you approach a cross-roads. You can either figure out ways to cope or you can give up.

Your basic needs such as financial, people support, sense of purpose and routine have to be dealt with during job search.

WHAT TO DO

- Talk it out. Talk to family and friends about how you are feeling.
- Acknowledge that your family may be reacting to your job loss.
- Network.
- Be involved or develop a hobby or interest.
- Think positive.
- Set small goals that you can achieve daily (for example, I'll mail ten resumes, make three calls, follow up on an interview, etc.)
- Reassess your skills and abilities. Do you need to consider upgrading or further training?
- Consider volunteering to gain more experience.
- Spiritual involvement can be energizing.
- Set a daily routine. Plan your days.