EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO JOB LOSS

When we think of grief, we often think only of death, but job loss or change can also cause stress and can include a period of sadness. By being aware of the typical stages of grief, you can help yourself pass through the stages with minimum harm - either physical or emotional.

Read through the stages described below. Perhaps you have experienced or felt some of what is described. Most people go through a process of disorganization, reorganization, and resolution - that is, letting go of the old job and rebuilding life without it. If you find you are “stuck” in one stage, you may want to talk to someone about your feelings.

ONE - Happiness or Shock and Denial

Some people at first feel wonderful - happy at having “vacation” or relief that the waiting is over. For most of us there is a numbness. We don’t believe that we have really lost our job, we hope for recall when that is very unlikely. We don’t act, because we do not really accept our loss.

TWO - Emotional Release

We need to give vent to our feelings of anger, sadness, frustration, jealousy, etc. Holding in feelings may lead to physical symptoms or may delay moving on to action.

THREE - Depression and Physical Distress

We feel lost and helpless. We doubt our abilities. We may feel hopeless. We show physical signs of stress like sleeplessness, loss of appetite or back and stomach problems.

FOUR - Panic and Guilt

We have trouble thinking and cannot plan effectively. We feel responsible for the lay-off even though we had no control over it. We keep thinking “if only.” We try to do everything at once, and nothing efficiently.

FIVE - Anger and Hostility

This is an important part of the recovery process. Anger can be positive, but we sometimes feel angry at those around us. We need to learn to use these strong feelings to give us the energy to make plans to move on to stage six.

SIX - Renewed Hope and Rebuilding

We begin to plan for our new life without the old job. We are able to take constructive action steps toward new work.

SEVEN - Resolution

We let go of our anger and false hopes. We feel in control of our lives again. The loss is still part of us but does not dictate our actions.