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Surviving Unemployment

Laid Off, Now What?!?

Surviving Unemployment, 2009 Recession Edition

The Layoff Lady



Releasing October 2009

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WHEN YOUR SELF-ESTEEM IS TIED TO TITLE OR INCOME

By [Laura Dawn Lewis](#)
Excerpt from Laid Off Now What 2009 [PRINT](#)

This is a tough situation to overcome because it generally means you will need to lose everything or close to everything in order to rebuild yourself from scratch.

The good news is, when its all over with, you will be so thankful that you went through the challenges and grateful for the inner peace and confidence you've gained. You'll be a strong, more effective person, your relationships will be more intimate and your life will change for the better.

How you deal with the self-esteem tied to title or income is ultimately a personal journey because your objective is to discover who the real you is and you'll have to separate the facade from the fact. The following 15 tactics will help you do that.

The good news? Rejoice! You are not your job. In fact, you're worth more than your job. Jobs can be replaced. People cannot.

You are not your bank account either. Money and wealth are inventions of man. What represents value remains contingent upon the context. Consider this: What would you rather have in the middle of the desert with no chance of rescue and only one way out? Enough water to walk to safety or a billion dollars in gold?

Choose the gold, you're dead. Choose the water, you live. In this scenario, the gold is worthless and the water is wealth. The lesson is simple. Your value as a human being isn't dependent upon tangible assets. If you've been successful before. Chances are, you'll be successful again. You've got the skills to recreate success.

Right now there's a lesson you need to learn and this lesson will open the doors to future opportunities you can't foresee or imagine at this time. If you find friends and colleagues avoid you now, don't be surprised. Some people do consider your title or bank account your worth. They're not your friends and you don't need them. This journey will put you in touch with new people who actually do value you for you. Soon the veneers will be a memory and you won't miss them. Look forward, not back.

The following fifteen tactics will help you do that while freeing you from any of the chains manufactured by self-esteem tied to title or money.

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THE 15 STEPS FOR OVERCOMING SELF-ESTEEM TIED TO JOB OR/AND INCOME

1. MAKE A LIST OF YOUR PERSONALITY ASSETS:

Friendly, outgoing, good listener, etc. Delete any that refer to your title or the amount of money you made. Look at what is left. This is how you define yourself.

2. MAINTAIN REGULAR CONTACT WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Avoid withdrawing from people. Men especially will do this when things get tough. If you have a friend who is unemployed, check in often. When people feel vulnerable, they tend to isolate. This can be very dangerous, especially if you or someone you know is prone to depression, feels trapped

3. CREATE A FRIENDS' LIST

Ask your close friends to write down at least ten words they would use to describe your personality and why they like you. This is how other people see you.

- **Compare your list with your friends' lists.** Are there similarities? Do your friends see you one way and you see yourself another?
- **Keep your friends' lists with you.** When you feel down, read it and remind yourself who you really are.

4. FAKE IT 'TIL YOU MAKE IT!

Keep your mind filled with positive affirmations and repeat them every morning when you get up. In time, you will start to live them and believe them, even if you feel silly saying them right now.

5. STAY AWAY FROM ALCOHOL AND DRUGS DURING THIS PERIOD.

Alcohol is a depressant and most drugs will prevent you from feeling what you need to go through. You'll stay stuck in your present situation without having the ability to get out.

6. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU ARE AFRAID OF.

Then write down the worst case scenario. [I cover this in more detail within the 7-proactive steps.](#) Now, pretend like you are giving advice to a friend. What would you tell them about these fears and What ifs? Write down your advice to solving each fear and what you can do to overcome it or prevent it.

7. CELEBRATE LITTLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

A response on a resume, a referral, an interview. Acknowledge these positive events and make them important.

8. PRAY, EVEN IF YOU FEEL SILLY OR AREN'T CONVINCED THERE IS A GOD OR A HIGHER POWER.

Not quite sure how to pray? Try asking for the courage to make it through the challenges. Ask for guidance and the ability to understand what God's plan is for you and ask for the humility to accept whatever it is. Then trust in the fact it will be exactly what you need even if it's not what you want. [Download The Serenity Prayer](#)

9. RESOLVE TO BE HAPPY, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.

No matter how tough life gets or challenging, wake up each day and pledge to be happy. Pledge to do so in the mirror so you see yourself making that commitment. This way, each day starts off with the right mental attitude.

10. KEEP BUSY.

Learn a new trade, write a book, take classes, do anything to keep your mind occupied and your hands busy. Go out to industry events and keep up on industry news.

11. WORK OUT AND KEEP YOUR BODY ACTIVE TOO.

Exercise will improve your mood. It will also help burn up some of the anxiety you are feeling. Keep a regular schedule by getting up in the morning just like you are going to work. If you find yourself withdrawing, try to resist sitting around all day and watching TV and instead go out where people are.

12. TALK TO PEOPLE YOU RESPECT WHO ARE WHERE YOU WANT TO BE.

Chances are they have failed and rebuilt themselves from nothing. You'll know them. They have this glow about them and seem very non-judgmental, patient and wise, but mostly something about them draws you to them. Most successful people have encountered a lesson in humility and had to come to terms with who they pretended they were before they could become who they are.

13. ASK FOR HELP.

Find a support group or confidant you can trust. This can be a psychologist, priest, rabbi, or informal support group like AA. Being around people will keep you motivated. Staying solitary day after day will sap strength and enflame your fears.

14. WATCH UPLIFTING SHOWS AND MOVIES

Shows like Biography and movies like *Working Girl*, *It's A Wonderful Life* and *Rudy* will keep your spirits up. Feeling sorry for yourself? Try movies that show you how bad things can really get and remind you to be grateful (and kick yourself off the pity pot) like *Schindler's List*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Killing Fields*.

15. SCHEDULE AT LEAST ONE LUNCH A WEEK WITH A FRIEND OR BUSINESS COLLEAGUE.

This will help you feel like you're still working and return your focus to career and away from yourself. If you can't meet a friend for lunch, spend a couple hours at your favorite coffee shop and talk to new people. The idea here is to get out, talk to people and feel like you normally do when employed.

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If you need a little more inspiration, there are two films I can recommend: Regarding Henry with Harrison Ford, Annette Bening and Michael Haley and Cinderella Man starring Russell Crowe, Renée Zellweger and Paul Giamatti. Both films are about men who were at the top of their game, wealthy and seemingly invincible. Both films show the men falling into the depths of what society tells us is failure and in each case, the lead characters confront their shortcomings and hardships head on, rebuild themselves and ultimately triumph. The twist in both cases is that success in the end isn't defined by their bank accounts but by something else far more important and far more valuable.

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