











Economic Uncertainty Toolkit



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HANDLING LAYOFFS

Basics for Managers



- Keep all employees informed on a continuing, regular basis about budgets and their impact on the company's services and work force.
- Notify first the people most affected by the layoffs.
- Remember that the method and manner in which layoffs are made has a direct impact upon how the individual who is being laid off will accept the decision and move beyond it.
- Communicate frequently with your work group. Give as much information regarding the situation as possible. Assume that inaccurate information is going around, which heightens stress. Thoughtfully plan your response to this.
- Confirm that the information you give regarding layoffs is correctly heard. Remember: people under stress do not listen well, and have a decreased ability to remember. Ask for feedback about what you have communicated, in order to make sure that it has been understood. Repeat your communication. Do not assume that it was heard or understood the first time.
- Think about how you would like to be treated if you were in the situation of an employee facing a layoff. Doing so will help you anticipate and prepare for the accompanying emotions.
- Be extra vigilant after you issue layoff notices. Watch for signs that an employee is having a hard time moving on with his/her life after a reasonable time or seems to be at risk. If you have concerns, contact Human Resources and your Employee Assistance Program.

Adapted from information on the Iowa Department of Personnel website.

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COPING STRATEGIES

For Managers & Supervisors
During Staff Reductions



- Be alert to the behaviors and moods of employees who have been left behind after a layoff. They are feeling stressed, may be angry or sad, and may be seeking ways to express these emotions. Be aware of this, and do not respond by becoming angry yourself.
- Rely on your Human Resources department. Human Resource professionals are skilled at guiding you through this process, including how best to talk to employees about layoffs, organizing informational sessions regarding benefits and unemployment, and helping to arrange outplacement assistance.
- Encourage employees to ask questions. If you do not have the answers, let them know what you are doing to find information. It is important to let employees be heard, and to believe what they say matters.
- Be available for questions and to offer support. This is important in times of stress and change.
- Maintain business as usual as much as possible. Routines reduce stress.
- Pay attention to your own emotional reaction to layoffs. Look for ways to manage stress, such as exercising, reducing caffeine, getting plenty of rest, and eating well-balanced meals
- Keep in mind that employees who remain with the company may also display stress-related behavior because of anxiety about the future. Employees who have not been laid off may feel “survivor’s guilt”.
- Call on the EAP for support, and inform employees about EAP services.

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THE EMOTIONS OF JOB LOSS



Career counselors and mental health professionals all agree: losing a job can be as traumatic as other major losses in life. Recovery is a process that takes time. Here are some points to support a healthier recovery:

- Through the process of termination, employees typically experience a roller coaster of emotions. Whether the layoff is welcomed or unwelcomed by the employee, there are many accompanying feelings that occur, including relief, fear, frustration, grief, anger, and helplessness. As employees get used to the idea of losing their job, emotions can change quickly depending on individual circumstances. This range of emotions is normal.
- Employees have different reactions to job loss, and may use free time in various ways. According to Charles Prugh, an outplacement and career consultant, many employees use a layoff to engage in personal self-exploration regarding future career choices. Some people decide after a layoff to start their own business, or to clarify what matters most to them in a future career. Others attempt to move as quickly as possible to the next position, driven by financial or professional reasons.
- As with other losses, employees go through a grief process that includes denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Once people have experienced a release of anger, frustration, and fear, and are moving toward acceptance, they begin to explore different career options. This may be done through networking, informational interviewing, career fairs, and other resources.
- The length of time for this grief and recovery process varies from individual to individual. Support and resources are available through the Employee Assistance Program as employees weigh decisions, make new life changes, and seek new opportunities.

Adapted from the "Unemployment Survival Handbook"

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COPING STRATEGIES For Employees



Staying healthy means using your personal resources most effectively. Try the following suggestions:

- Get regular physical exercise, alternated with relaxation; this will reduce the stress your body is carrying.
- Structure your time - keep busy!
- Talk to people. Talking helps in times of uncertainty by providing an outlet and perspective.
- Avoid overusing alcohol or other drugs that block your ability to express yourself and adapt to change.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible. Use your free time constructively and positively.
- Spend some time alone as necessary, and remember it is also important to spend time with others and allow people to take care of you.
- Sometimes it helps to just let yourself feel broken for awhile.
- Keep a journal. Write your way through sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good and will make you feel good about yourself.
- Develop an inventory of your skills and their related applications.
- Try to make as many daily decisions as you can, which will give you a feeling of control over your life. Keep a list of things to do, and check them off as they are completed.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).

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SURVIVORS OF DOWNSIZING

What to Expect



You may experience a host of emotions following the sudden downsizing of your colleagues at work. After all, your job has been spared while others have lost theirs.

- You may experience fear that this might not be the end of the cuts, and that you may be next to lose your job.
- You may feel survivor's guilt – “Why did Joe lose his job and not me? He is an excellent worker!”
- You may have empathy for the plight of those who have lost their jobs.
- You may feel a sense of relief that the downsizing is over, and joy that you still have your job.
- You may feel anger directed toward your employer or, more generally, toward the state of the economy.
- You may grieve the loss of your coworkers/friends and want to reach out to them in some way to comfort them.
- You may have feelings of helplessness, depression and vulnerability.
- You may want to commiserate with your former coworkers, keeping communication going beyond the brief good-bye on the day of their termination.

It is normal for you to have these feelings. Allow yourself to experience them in your own time.

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10 Steps for Managing Through Transition



1. Understand what is ending. Managing organizational change is not as simple as laying people off. It also involves understanding who is losing what and who the stakeholders are in the organization as it is. The stakeholders are the ones who have an investment in having things stay the way they are. Stakeholders might be the people who developed the service the organization provides, those who have a leadership role in facilitating its development and delivery, or even those who have been there from the start and take pride in the organization as it is. Unless managers take time to understand how these individuals are affected by the changes, it will be difficult for employees to work through the process of loss, understand the organization's future, and feel acknowledged for their often substantial contributions.

2. Understand what is beginning. In order to successfully reach a new beginning after changes occur, managers need to understand what a successful organization will look like in the future. How can this department or organization be successful with 20 fewer people doing the work? What will the new processes look like? Are there any opportunities that might arise out of this change, as difficult as it may be? For instance, will departments be required to develop and integrate systems in such a way that greater efficiency can be achieved? While it is important for organizations to recognize the necessary grief and loss involved when layoffs occur, it is not in an organization's best interests to allow a picture of chaos and destruction to emerge among employees. It is absolutely essential for managers of changing organizations to be able to create a picture for employees of what the new reality will look like, if the organization is to be successful after the changes occur.

3. Get your team on board. Successful change begins at the top. Senior managers must be able to understand the reasons for change and "sell" this to the managers in his or her organization. Reasonable attempts must be made to discuss team members concerns. The team will probably provide extremely useful feedback that can help to make changes successful. Even the most negative person on the team can contribute a great deal if his or her concerns are acknowledged and considered.

4. Communicate, communicate, communicate. It is essential to create a comprehensive communication plan if changes are to be effective. Most employees want to know what will be happening to them, especially whether they will be laid off. Sharing as much as you can about the change will reduce feelings of powerlessness. Do not delay in confirming whether there will be job cuts. Explain in detail why workforce reductions are necessary. Preparing employees by presenting the rationale for change, even if it is unpopular, will go a long way toward making the changes less traumatic for everyone. Employees will understand if the workforce needs to be reduced as a last resort. Managers' communication plans need to include regular employee meetings to provide a forum for discussion even if there is no news. If employees know that they are getting regular updates from managers then there will be less need for them to speculate at the water cooler, and the stress level will be lower.

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5. Allow for emotional responses. Anger, concern, insecurity and survivor guilt are all perfectly natural emotions for employees to feel. It is important for managers to understand that it is OK to feel this way. Otherwise, employees may release these feelings in non-productive ways or situations. Sympathetic managers often become alarmed at the sight of tears, when this is really a normal reaction to an abnormal situation, and not a sign of serious decompensation. If it appears that an employee seems unable to cope with the stress of the situation, referral to the Employee Assistance Program is both helpful and appropriate.

6. Proactively address the negative effects of less staff for the same work. Increased workloads for employees who survive layoffs are inevitable. Often this has the added effect of negatively impacting teamwork during a time when all have to work together to rethink how tasks are done. But managers can choose to involve their employees in the search for solutions, thus addressing both teamwork and efficiency simultaneously. This empowers employees, and can increase their level of investment in the future.

7. Demonstrate continuing long-term interest in the careers of the survivors. Following layoffs is a good time to introduce 'stretch assignments': those that will expand the skills of survivors and demonstrate your confidence in them. It is also a good time to increase the frequency of discussions about career-related topics, including possible advancement opportunities.

8. Empirically determine how things are going; don't just guess. Management by facts is the best way to gauge how employees are performing after layoffs. Managers still must report to their external constituencies: board members, investors, boards of directors, media, and communities in which they do business. Periodic, systematic employee attitude assessments enable management to ascertain the impact of their actions on the day-to-day operations of the organization.

9. Partner with Human Resources and EAP: Don't agonize over what, when and how you will communicate with employees. Human Resources and EAP can help you design communication plans, lead you through the process of managing the employee transitions and help you handle employees and situations that are problematic for you.

10. Honor the endings. Find ways to acknowledge and give thanks to those who have contributed to the organization, especially those who are going to be laid off. Acknowledgments might include scheduling a departmental lunch for the laid-off employees, where individuals and managers are offered the opportunity to present the contributions of the employees, either individually or as a group, and wish them good luck with cards or a cake. Very simple efforts go a long way, and are often cherished by those people who are leaving the organization. This will help all employees, both those affected by the layoffs and their survivors, to move beyond the ending,

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RESOURCES TO OFFER LAID OFF EMPLOYEES



MIIA EAP benefit will be available to laid off employees 60 days beyond their termination date.

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Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development

**Call the TeleClaim Center at 1-877-626-6800 if you are
calling from the following area codes:
351, 413, 508, 774, and 978.**

**Call the TeleClaim Center at 617-626-6800 if you are
calling from any other area code.**

TTY/TTD: 1-888-527-1912

Email to: webmaster@detma.org

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Massachusetts Department of Career Services

Career Center Services: 1-617-626-5300

Email to: DCSCustomerfeedback@detma.org

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COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY IN TODAY'S FINANCIAL MARKET



The markets have been greatly fluctuating. The news reports are disconcerting. There are many questions about the bail-out plan on Capitol Hill. No matter the circumstances, for most individuals, the topic of money can generate stress. In uncertain economic times, feelings of fear, panic or anxiety are not uncommon. While the situation locally, on Wall Street, and in Washington, DC, may not be in our control, there are many things we *can* do to cope effectively with stress and financial uncertainty. The following is a list of suggestions:

- **Talk With Others**
Share your feelings with family, friends, and colleagues with whom you feel comfortable.
- **Moderate Your Exposure to the Media**
Continuous media coverage of the financial crisis can feel overwhelming. Be aware of your reactions and decide when to turn off the TV or switch to less intense programming.
- **Maintain Perspective**
Distinguish between what has actually happened and what might happen. Keep your concerns in proportion to the actual situation. Avoid catastrophic thinking.
- **Practice Positive “Self-Talk”**
When you have negative thoughts, challenge the logic of those thoughts. Replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts.
- **Prioritize**
Clarify your concerns. Identify what you have control over and what you do not. Act on what you have control over.
- **Limit Major Life Decisions**
The more changes and challenges in our lives, the greater the stress level. If you have any influence over the timing of upcoming changes, you might consider delaying some of them. Best-made decisions are not made uncertainly. Delay major decisions until more certain times.
- **Use Humor**
Remember to laugh. Humor can provide relief even during the most stressful times.
- **Remember the Basics: Nutrition, Rest, and Exercise**
Eat a balanced diet. Sleep eight hours at night. Exercise regularly; walking and other physical activities will help. Keeping yourself healthy is the best way to stay resilient.

If your reaction to current financial events is interfering with daily activities, or if you would simply like to talk with a counselor about everyday stress, call your Employee Assistance Program. We can provide financial resources and confidential services, at no charge to employees and dependents. Licensed clinicians are available 24/7 for crisis intervention and support.

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COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY IN TODAY'S FINANCIAL MARKET



Helpful Resources Related websites

www.practicalmoneyskills.com/english/at_home/consumers/budgeting/: resources and articles on budgeting and getting out of debt

www.bankrate.com: interest rate information

www.betterbudgeting.com: tips on budgeting and getting out of debt

www.fool.com: The Motley Fool newsletter

www.balancepro.net/education/publications.html: information on how to manage income and achieve economic goals

Organizations

National Foundation for Credit Counseling: 1-800-388-2227

Books

- [Nine Steps to Financial Freedom](#) by Suze Orman, 1996.
- [Managing Debt For Dummies](#) by Ventura and Reed, 2007
- [Making The Most Of Your Money](#) by Jane Bryant Quinn, 1991, 1997.
- [Spend Yourself Rich: A Values Based Approach to Help You Reach Your Financial Dreams](#) by Grady Cash, 1998.
- [Your Money or Your Life: Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence](#) by Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin, 1991, 1997.

A financial plan is vital to financial health. The following tips will help you manage household finances in uncertain times.

1. Take Inventory

List what you spend now and identify expenses that can be reduced or eliminated. See how much you can save.

2. Set aside Money for Savings and Emergencies

Regularly deposit money in a savings account. Financial planners recommend that you set aside enough money for three months of bills.

3. Reduce and Limit Debt

Stop using credit cards. Buy only what you can afford.

4. Prioritize Spending

Distinguish items you need now from those items that can wait. Prioritize spending and saving efforts. Some larger ticket items, like vacations, require thoughtful planning over time.

5. Involve the Entire Household

To be successful, all family members need to be involved in the financial plan. Children, too, can contribute to savings and set financial goals.

6. Include Fun and Relaxation

Fun and relaxation are essential to the overall success of a financial plan. If monies are limited, be creative about ways to enjoy yourself on a limited budget or for free.

7. Review and Evaluate

Review financial plans regularly. Be flexible and reprioritize as needed. The goal is to develop life long habits of smart spending and saving. Consult with a financial professional as needed.

Important Notice: Information in this flyer is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns contact Health Resources EAP. Health Resources is not responsible for the content of the materials provided on the Internet.

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The Pain and Possibility of



Vulnerable Times

On 10/6/08, the Dow Jones Industrial plummeted more than 800 points. Now, many people are losing money daily, facing potential job losses, feeling heightened anxiety over the loss of security, and wondering how they will manage their finances. This kind of shake up can be an invitation to deep pain, rich exploration, and hopeful transformation. An important thing for us to remember is that it is the grit in the oyster's shell that results in the creation of a pearl. We have all experienced the grit. Our daily challenge is to transform that grit and consciously cultivate pearls in our lives.

The EAP offers facilitated discussions designed to help participants remember to stay connected to people, relationships, and activities that matter most in their lives. This fundamental connection is critical to navigating our way through the pain and possibility, and creating hope during these vulnerable times. The discussion will consist of didactic moments, an exercise to elicit relaxation, and a personal resiliency plan for going forward.

Contact your EAP Consultant to see if this training is available in your area.



**MIIA EAP is a free, confidential service
available to all employees and their family members.
Call: 1.800.451.1834**

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presents . . .



Building Resiliency

In a Stressful World

Everyone experiences excess stress from time to time. Chronic stress, however, takes a toll on our physical health, our sense of well-being, and our relationships.

In this program, participants will learn the physical and psychological consequences of chronic stress, will understand how to recognize stress before it becomes a problem, and will practice specific stress reduction techniques that may be applied at work and at home.

The following will be addressed:

- Behavioral and lifestyle approaches
- Cognitive strategies- how to think away stress
- Relaxation techniques- attendees will participate in a relaxation exercise

Contact your EAP Consultant to see if this training is available in your area.



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