

July 14, 2008
News Columns and Newsletters
Source: Ohio State University Extension

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Please Release on the Following Date:
July 14 - 18, 2008

FOR RELEASE

Five County Solutions

“Helping You Manage Between Jobs”

Recognizing Grief Related to Job Loss

Part Three in a Ten-Part Series

The loss of a job causes a wide variety of emotions that sometimes surprise people. Grief is one of those emotions. Grieving is a process that takes people down the same path with common “stops” along the way. Each person experiencing grief will arrive at these “stops” but the length of time they spend at each “stop” varies. It’s important to remember that you can slip backwards on this path. Being aware of this is important. Be patient with yourself. Last week the first two of the five stages of grief 1) shock and denial, and 2) anger were discussed.

The last three stages will be examined this week. Depression and detachment are the third stage of grief. Those individuals that have not previously experienced depression may not recognize the symptoms. Depression can present itself as trouble sleeping. You can fall asleep but you wake up in the night and have trouble getting back to sleep. Depression can also show itself by making you feel overwhelmed and you lack energy. What tasks you might have thought, before your job loss, as no big deal to accomplish might now seem insurmountable. You can even feel that you are helpless.

Rather than remaining in bed after you have been tossing and turning, your time might be better spent getting up and doing something productive. Putting in a load of clothes, reading, journaling about your feelings, listing the questions you have about finding a new job, or retraining for a new career can move you to feeling more in control.

Detachment is the feeling that you are separated from things around you. When you have had the routine of workdays and schedules and then suddenly have nowhere to go each day, you can feel that your contact with the outside world has been cut off. Jobs provide a social network that can be missed. Your identity and even a sense of dignity can come to you through the work you perform. What you do for a living is just one part of you. Remind yourself of all the things you are to the many people in your life. To those around you that have been impacted by a job loss, remind them of what they mean to you and how you value them. We are many things to many people. Take action to regain a sense of control in your life.

Small things can start to make a difference and build confidence that your life is yours and within realm of your control

Stage 4 of grief is dialogue and bargaining. Talking about your feelings and concerns is an example of a dialogue. You can talk to your family, a friend, a co-worker, a clergy member, or a professional. Dialogue can also mean reaching out to agencies to learn of options that are available to you. Reaching out to others and having a desire to tell one's story is natural. To discuss your struggle with others can lead to finding meaning for what has happened. Often times we learn our true feelings about an issue as we hear ourselves talk to someone. Bargaining can occur when a person is not feeling confident in their ability to deal with the adversity. They will look outside themselves and ask for help. "If I do this, will you take away the loss?" "If only I had just" A person may agree to take extreme measures to change their situation.

The fifth stage in the grief process is acceptance. When you arrive at acceptance you are more able to explore and consider options. Prior to this you have not have been as open to taking actions. People are ready to explore and consider options. As the acceptance stage progresses, a new plan begins to take shape or, at the very least, people are open to new options.

It is important to address these stages of grief if you are struggling with your job loss. Remember that this is a situation that you probably have never had to deal with before. It is understandable that things will take time to straighten out. If you become "stuck" at one stage and just can't move forward in your life, your health can suffer. A "Chain of Adversity" has been found. It starts with a job loss, and then moves to financial strain, depression, issues of personal control, emotional functioning, and then physical health. Those individuals, from a study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, which kept their emotional health, were able to return to the workforce more quickly so be ready to address your movement through the stages of grief. Don't let issues keep you from moving forward. Knowing what feelings are to be expected is your first step to taking back control in your life. (Source: Willenz, Pam. "Job Loss and the Resulting Financial Strain Can Lead to Downward Spiral of Depression and Poor Health, says Research." APA Online. 6 Oct. 2002. (<http://www.apa.org/releases/unemployment.html>.)

Next week we will discuss the stress that accompanies any job loss.

(References:

Boelter, L. and LeFebvre, J. (2006). Taking Care of Yourself, *Managing Between Jobs*, University of Wisconsin Extension.

Ferry, N. (2000). Making Sense of My Losses, *Bouncing Back When your Income Drops*, Penn State University Cooperative Extension.

University of Minnesota Extension, (2001). The Importance of How you View the Situation, *Adjusting to Sudden Reduced Income*.)

Many of you are facing uncertain times due to future job losses in our area. Ohio State University Extension wants to help with accurate information on how to deal with these uncertain times and the financial and emotional strain you will experience.

Family and Consumer Sciences Educators in these five adjoining counties (Clinton, Fayette, Greene, Highland, and Montgomery) are working together to provide information through news articles, factsheets, and possible class sessions. You can contact us at any time for more information and resources. In Greene County please contact Melanie Hart at 372-9971 or hart.382@cfaes.osu.edu for more information.

Look for weekly new articles with information on financial issues and family and community resources. In the first few weekly news articles we will be discussing the emotional reactions you may have or experience during this time in more detail than in the article above.

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