

FINDING THE WORDS

A COMPASSIONATE
LOOK AT HOW TO
VOICE
YOUR JOB LOSS

Job loss is one of the top five most stressful life events you will experience.

Be gentle with yourself.



FINDING THE WORDS

The Day of Your Termination

GIVE YOURSELF A MOMENT

You've just lost your job. You have no words. You haven't even fully processed what just happened ... and you need to let your loved ones know why you are home early, or why you are not going to work tomorrow. Deep breath. Give yourself compassion.

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Who needs to know right now? Not everyone needs to know what just happened, but there will be one person, or two people at most, with whom you should speak in the next few hours (like a spouse, best friend, etc.).

Focus on the first person with whom you need to share this news, and what you want to say to them - it doesn't have to be a lot of words.



"I've just been laid off work. Today was my last day and I need your support while I figure out my next opportunity."

Your loved ones care deeply for you, and while they too may be upset by this event, they are a part of your comfort and emotional support system. Know, employment loss does not change who you are, or how much you are loved.

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Working Notification

STAYING ON AFTER YOU'VE BEEN LET GO

Your employer may terminate your role, but have you continue to work to allow for transition of work, or the close of a project. This gives you more income; however, your change in status will need to be announced before your last day.

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If you need more time before the announcement is made, then ask for it: *"I appreciate that this is time sensitive, but if it is possible, could you give me a day to get my head wrapped around this change, so I am ready to handle the questions and concerns that will come?"*

Once the announcement is made, in addition to sharing this with your loved ones, you need to have a response ready for your colleagues, coworkers and other parties that may reach out.



"As per the recent announcement, I'll be leaving my role here on DATE. I've enjoyed my time working with each of you, learning many new and valuable skills. I look forward to continuing to work with you to transition files and contacts. After my last day I'd like to stay connected (my contact details are below)."

Your work community will offer condolences and support that you may not be ready to receive. Be as open and gracious as possible so your exit will be dignified and graceful.

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Responding to Colleagues & Work Contacts

WHEN YOU ARE READY

Within minutes, or hours, of your termination your coworkers will know what has happened and they may reach out. You do not have to respond immediately to their e-mails or texts until you are ready. Consider sending an acknowledgement of their care that gives you more time to re-connect with them.



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Recognising their kindness is a smart move, but you don't have to respond immediately; you can wait 24 hours before acknowledging their message. In the coming days you will have the words to discuss what happened (see the article on Page 5 for additional support with responding to colleagues), but for now all that is needed is an acknowledgement to keep this person open to your future needs (like referrals and references).

"I appreciate that you have reached out to me today, you are very thoughtful. I'm going to take some time to process this change, and I look forward to continuing our professional connection in the weeks ahead."

Some members of your work community will reach out and others may not; it doesn't mean they don't care, they just may not have the words. In recognizing the kindness of those who do you'll have open doors later, when you need them.

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Widening The Circle of People Who Know

IN GOOD TIME

Within the first days and weeks of being unemployed, be prepared to share your employment status with others, like friends, other family, and neighbours; sometimes because they ask a common conversation starter ("How is work going?"), or they heard about the lay-offs on the news.

Be prepared for the kindness of people who care about you ("You seem down today, are you OK?").

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There are those people in your life who need to know, or deserve to know, about your status change - these are the people who will be hurt if you don't share this with them in a timely manner. Consider who these people are in your life and be prepared to share your status change.



"Listen, I want to let you know I'm no longer working. It was a shock and I'm still adjusting to it. I really appreciate your support while I figure this out."

Your wider community cares about you, and while that care may feel intrusive, be prepared to respond to it. Be compassionate, with yourself first, and then with this wider community.

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Letting Your Network & Contacts Know

THINK STRATEGICALLY

"There will likely still be professional colleagues who haven't heard the news about your layoff, especially if you weren't able to send an email from your work account and didn't have access to your full contact list."

This comprehensive article from David Lancefield and Dorie Clark, in the Harvard Business Review presents powerful tips on reaching out and the strategic value of doing so.

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In the article, you will find tactical guidance on your approach to informing your wider network, as well as excellent wording examples for how to communicate your change of status, making this easier for you.

PROFESSIONAL TRANSITIONS

You're Not Powerless in the Face of a Layoff

by David Lancefield and Dorie Clark

May 07, 2020

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[https://hbr.org/2020/05/youre-not-powerless-in-the-face-of-a-layoff?utm_source=CERIC+Subscription&utm_campaign=8d1acdaa6c-EMAIL CAMPAIGN 2017 05 25 COPY 01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1d052da7c8-8d1acdaa6c-457854089](https://hbr.org/2020/05/youre-not-powerless-in-the-face-of-a-layoff?utm_source=CERIC+Subscription&utm_campaign=8d1acdaa6c-EMAIL%20CAMPAIGN%202017%2005%2025%20COPY%201&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1d052da7c8-8d1acdaa6c-457854089)

Your network is the best place to find new opportunity, do not forget or ignore this core group of contacts in the aftermath of a lay-off; this is a key support network for your re-employment.

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Responding to Interviewer Questions

BE PREPARED

There is no avoiding the question “Why did you leave your last job?” in an interview, whether it shows up in the phone screen, at the live interview, or both. You are an abundance of potential and that needs to shine through your answer to this question.



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While stressful, this question does not need a long or complicated answer. When you are unemployed, your response needs to reflect what is positive, while being matter-of-fact about the things you could not control, providing as much context as is appropriate.

There isn't an employed person who hasn't been touched (directly or indirectly) by lay-offs and termination, and this includes your interviewers

“My previous manager had to reduce the team for economic reasons. As a result, they let go of a number of people, including myself, choosing to focus their remaining resources on urgent, rather than emerging, priorities.”

As long as you are confident, calm and positive about your previous employer (and the experience you gained there), the interview will move on to questions that more deeply explore your professional experience.

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WORKSHEET: Self-Expression During Job Loss

MOVE GENTLY

Before moving into completing this worksheet, consider the following:

- How are you relating to where you are in your career transition right now (i.e. confused, hurt, open, curious, etc.)?
- What is your response/reaction to having to find words to position your job loss to others (i.e. are you accepting of this, or resenting it)? Are you judging yourself for this response/reaction?
- Given what is going on for you in this moment, what's a wise and kind way to respond to yourself right now? Be open to your answer and follow your advice.

Adapted from: Unshakable Confidence by Mare Chapman, page 68.



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Consider the following writing prompts, and sketch answers for yourself so you will have the words when you need them.

Being your best self, how would you like to respond to...

- a direct question about your employment status or job loss?
- the curiosity of others about your work/job loss?
- care and concern from a loved one?
- care and concern from a colleague or work contact?
- the interview question "Why did you leave your last employer?"

"We can chose to be perfect and admired, or to be real and loved."

- Glennon Doyle Melton

