

## Unemployed but Employable

**Linda J. M. Holloway\***

*Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Psychology and Counseling, Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, Alabama, USA*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Linda J. M. Holloway, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Psychology and Counseling, Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, Alabama, USA.

**Received:** June 10, 2017; **Published:** July 19, 2017

Companies around the world are faced with having to close their doors resulting in massive layoffs. People everywhere are being impacted by the many possibilities of being unemployed. Many companies are having to downsize in order to be the right size to continue to operate. During these difficult times in the economy, there has been an increase in the number of people worried about the loss of their jobs. This has created an immeasurable amount of stress in their lives. Not only are people faced with a loss of income, but they have no healthcare, professional identity, job esteem, or a daily routine which has kept them going the past several years. A person's life purpose is often interwoven into their life-work; therefore, when they lose their job, they feel like their life has no meaning. Work provided them an opportunity to have a formal social networking system. The termination of their employment results in them losing that part of their lives. A person who loses their job experiences the same type of emotions that a person who loses a loved one experiences - sadness, anger, frustration and bitterness.

This paper is designed to provide some tips as to how people can cope with unemployment. It is pertinent during this time of a person's life to maintain their mental health. Keeping their mental health intact will be very beneficial in obtaining future employment. Please keep in mind that being unemployed does not make you are unemployable.

### **A Recommended List of Steps to Cope with Unemployment:**

- **Establish a Working Budget** – Make a complete list of all your monthly expenditures. Compare this list to your current income. More than likely, you will need to streamline your monthly expenses. You can accomplish this by establishing a mission essential list of items that you must have and deleting non-essential items you will need to eradicate. You will discover there are many items you spend money on monthly that are non-essential items. These are things you can live without. They are purchases that add pleasure to your life; for example, dining out, going to the movies, shopping, and cable, etc.
- **Check with your credit card companies about reduced payments** – This is where you will make a request to pay less than your normal monthly payment. You can also make a request to pay the interest rate only during your time of unemployment.
- **Mortgage payment** – Be sure to speak with your mortgage company about deciding how you can reduce your monthly mortgage. You might qualify to refinance your home. This would allow you to lower your monthly payments and interest rate. You can also check to see how much equity you have in your home which you might want to use to pay off some bills, etc.
- **Get a roommate** – I know this might sound a bit challenging, particularly if you have always lived by yourself. This certainly is an idea you might want to strongly consider. It can be a viable option to assist with your monthly mortgage or an opportunity to make some additional income. Should you decide to go this route, be sure to check with others who have already gone through this process. They will be able to tell you about the pros and cons and what lessons they have learned. Any time you can speak with someone who has already done what you are trying to do, it can be beneficial. This will keep you from having to make the same mistakes someone else made. You would definitely want to interview your future renter. Develop a contract explicitly stating your rules and policies about renting. Having a contract will help to alleviate any confusion about your expectations.

- **Apply for unemployment** – If leaving your job was not your fault then you should qualify for unemployment; however, if you were fired or voluntarily left your job, then you might not qualify for unemployment. It is possible that you may be able to and you should check it out.
- **Accept your reality** – Being unemployed can be very difficult, but the sooner you are able to accept this as a reality, the quicker you will be able to move forward. There are many things in life you will encounter along this journey. You must be willing to dust yourself off and get back in the game. Once you accept this is your life for now, then you can establish a game plan. Recognizing this is your reality does not mean your current situation is permanent. What this does mean is that you are in a temporary situation and you need to push through it until you get to the other side.
- **Have a plan** – Set daily goals for yourself as to how you plan on obtaining your next job. Have a plan which will allow you to establish benchmarks that you can accomplish daily. Dedicate at least 6 to 7 hours of your day looking for employment. Looking for a job is a job. The hours you allocate to seeking employment may not be directly related to applying for jobs, but it can include such things as: updating your resume, creating an online portfolio, researching companies, or practicing your interviewing skills. You will discover when you have a plan, you can work your plan and plan your work.
- **Stop the negative chatter** – It is easy to down yourself and feel like you are a loser when you are unemployed. Many negative thoughts will creep in your mind. This is the time you will need to be the most kind to yourself. Be intentional not to focus on the negativity in your life; however, when you do find yourself thinking negatively about your situation, write it down and flip it into a positive statement. For example, “I will never find a job” change it to “I will keep applying for work until I walk into my life’s purpose”.
  - Watch your thoughts; they become words.
  - Watch your words; they become actions.
  - Watch your actions; they become habits.
  - Watch your habits; they become character.
  - Watch your character, it becomes your destiny.
  - Your mind is a garden.
  - Your thoughts are seeds
  - Or you can grow weeds!
  - Lao Tso*
- **Do not go at this alone** – During your period of being unemployed it is so tempting to crawl in a corner and disconnect from the world. You simply just want to withdraw from others because you feel like they will not understand or you do not want to be a burden. Whatever you do, do not isolate yourself from others; stay connected. You can stay connected with others through social media, church, mosque, synagogue or alumnae associations. Get involved in a professional organization even if you do not have the funds to pay. Offer to donate your services for the membership fee. Being connected brings added value to your life. Also, this is a great opportunity to let others know you are seeking employment.
- **Get your family involved** – You might not want to tell your family that you lost your job. Having family support can be very beneficial. It is not fun trying to keep your job loss a secret from family members. Eventually, they will find out anyway and that can only make the situation worse. I strongly recommend having a family meeting. Give each person the opportunity to discuss their feelings. The family should come up with a family plan as to how they would like to move forward. Make time to speak about the family budget and exactly what impact this will have on the family. Try to be as realistic and lighthearted as possible. You do

not want the people leaving the meeting feeling like all the fun will be sucked out of their lives. This is a great opportunity for the family to get creative in how they can have fun on a reduced budget. For example, look for activities in your local community that are free to the public. Many times, these events will serve food.

- **Join the job club** – Check out the job club in your local area. Being around others who are having the same experiences as you can serve as a great motivator and encourager in helping you get through the process. Job clubs are a great way to assist with finding future employment and are also great networking opportunities.
- **Volunteer** – When you are unemployed you tend to think your life has no value. Putting yourself in the position to help others is a wonderful way to take your mind off of you. This also will look good on your resume that you were willing to serve others when you were unemployed. You can also gain some valuable skills. Who knows, this could turn into a full-time job opportunity. From my personal encounter, I had a friend once who had fallen on hard times and he offered to volunteer for a painter. The painter was so impressed with his willingness to work for free that he hired him and taught him how to paint.
- **Maintain a Stress Reduction Plan** – Unemployment can sap your energy leaving you feeling like you do not want to do anything. There will be times when you will not even feel like getting out of the bed. Maintaining a stress reduction plan is a plus. It helps keep you from feeling depressed. You can practice meditation, yoga, or prayer to reduce your stress. Exercising is one of the best stress relievers. You do not have to be a rock star athlete. You can take a brisk walk for 30 minutes or ride a bike three times a week. If you would like to join a gym, there are many gyms that offer a 30-day free promotional you can take advantage of. Also, check out your local YMCA because many of them offer reduced or no charges to use the gym.
- **Eat Well** – What you are putting in your body seems to be the last thing you are concerned with at this point in your life. You have heard the saying “you are what you eat.” Well there is some truth to this statement. Keeping yourself in good health is a must. Being able to get in your clothes for your interview will make you feel a lot better. During this time, it is very easy to go for the comfort foods - the sugars and the carbs. They will give you quick energy but leave you with more pounds and no energy. Make every attempt to avoid intake of foods which have an adverse effect on you. Take care of yourself and eat healthy. You will be happy that you did when you can wear your favorite suit for your next interview.
- **Update your resume** - Spend some time updating your resume to fit the current market. You might even consider changing your previous occupation; therefore, you want to make sure your resume highlights any new skills. Check with local four year colleges or any community colleges’ career centers to seek professional assistance with updating your resume. You can also request to take a career assessment to note any changes in your career interests. Perhaps you are working in a career which is not the right career fit. Completing a career assessment would better serve you with matching you with the appropriate career.
- **Learn a new skill** – Since you have the additional time on your hands, this can be a great opportunity to develop a new skill set. Perhaps you always wanted to take up a particular study. You can check into getting a certificate, attending a workshop, or seminar that would allow you to obtain the new skill set.
- **Be flexible** - We all would like to be working in our dream job. Being without employment can cause financial hardship. Be open to take temporary employment that can benefit you with your finances. Plus, when you are looking for a new job, your future employers will be impressed that you were willing to work a temporary job. Trust me this will speak volumes about your work ethic and character.
- **Be Creative with your job-hunting** - Instead of sending out a resume on the internet, personally go by companies and drop off your resume. Send your resume to friends who can pass it on to other people who are hiring. Be very proactive when it comes to looking for a job. Remember nobody cares more about you getting a job than you do.

- **Follow up on your interviews** – After you have been interviewing for a while and you still have not gotten a job, this can wear on your soul. Too many no's can seem like you are on a dead-end street. Please keep in mind you only need one yes. Put your pride aside and call the employers and ask them to provide you honest feedback about your interview. Granted, they may not tell you exactly why they were not able to hire you; however, you can take whatever feedback they provide to polish up for your future interviews. Remember you are interviewing to win. You want to make a good impression and land the job.
- **See your situation as temporary and not permanent** – Do not take up residence in a temporary state. Continue to remind yourself daily this is temporary and not permanent. Stay motivated and do something daily to move you out of your norm. Avoid getting in a slump and becoming stagnated. Try to keep moving towards your goal of locating employment.

*“When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us”.*

Alexander Graham Bell

Unemployment can be very devastating and can be emotionally, psychologically, and physiologically overwhelming. Much of our identity is tied into what we do for a living. When people meet you for the first time, one of the questions they will ask you is “what do you do for a living”? Thus, being unemployed may lead a person to feel less than, ashamed, and embarrassed about their current situation; even though they may not have had any control over the situation. It is important not to define yourself as an unemployed person. One of the things a person should do is redefine their narrative by, saying “I am temporarily between occupations as I release my destiny to the world”.

It can be quite challenging to maintain a positive attitude when you are unemployed. You will quickly discover in life that if you are able to keep an open mind and a positive attitude, you will be in a better situation to cope with life's temporary setbacks. Having positive affirmations, you can whisper to yourself daily positive sayings that can keep your mind off negativity. For example, saying things to yourself such as: “this too shall pass” and “there will be a brighter day” or “this is just a bend in the road but not the end of my road”. Yes, being unemployed can rock you to the core. In order to come out on the other side smelling like a champion, you will have to show yourself some compassion. By applying the aforementioned tips to your life, you will discover that you can thrive and survive your time of being unemployed. Remember you are unemployed but employable.

*“Nothing is impossible, the word itself says ‘I’m possible’!”* Audrey Hepburn

### Conflict of Interest

It does not constitute a conflict of interest for the authors.

**Volume SI Issue 1 July 2017**

**©All rights reserved by Linda J. M. Holloway.**