



Surviving in the Workplace during a Layoff Process

Employees across the nation are experiencing the effects of the faltering economy in very personal ways. Public and private workplaces are downsizing, sending millions of highly qualified professionals to the unemployment lines. Layoffs not only impact those receiving the pink slips. Multiply that number times 3-5 to include colleagues who are impacted by layoffs through displacement or the sheer stress of witnessing the layoff, losing a valued friend and carrying a heavier workload, and families of the laid off employees who now must adjust to a *new normal* at home. Those remaining often experience increased and reorganized workloads, lower morale, increased job insecurity and increased health risks related to stress.

**EAP is available for +/- THREE MONTHS post-separation from your job with the State.
Call us for help with the transition: 1-888-834-2830**

Before the Layoff

The waiting period between the announcement of downsizing and the actual layoff is a very stressful time. Rumors abound. Productivity slows down as staff waits for the final workload re-apportionment. There may be a sharp increase in sickness and accidents both on and off the job. **Take steps to protect yourself:**

Stay connected with your colleagues and friends. Don't get isolated (and don't avoid each other). It is important to be listened to, so listen to each other without judging or prying. Don't problem-solve for each other. Avoid questions like "What are you going to do now? How many interviews do you have lined up?" Instead, simply state that you are available if your colleague feels like talking. Let the person know that he/she is valued and provide your contact information if you wish to be there to listen or help out.

Diet: Make conscious daily choices to eat more fruits, vegetables, and regular small meals that include protein. Stay hydrated. Avoid increasing your intake of alcohol, caffeine, nicotine and sugar.

Exercise: Get plenty of it! Soak up the Vitamin D of the sun on a midday walk; chat and laugh with a colleague. The exercise and companionship will improve your mood and focus for the rest of the day.

Sleep: Maintain good sleeping habits. Lack of sleep will exacerbate other problems.

Hobbies: Do what makes you feel good in your off hours. Garden, play music, cook good meals, bike, help others, connect with kids and pets. Ask yourself: What am I doing when I feel the best? Then, work it into your life.

Attitude: Those who take a non-blaming, constructive view of the situation often do better through layoffs than those who are angry at the company, themselves, co-workers, and the world. It is important not to take the layoff personally. Avoid thinking of yourself as a victim. This attitude will dis-empower you and slow your progress.

Managers: Stay in touch with your staff. Reassurance that they are valued *and why* as well as regular contact with you are absolutely necessary. Praise good work. Allow time and space for emotions. Provide guidance for meaningful work during this interim period. Emphasize the importance of self-care. Remind people that the EAP is here to help. **State of Vermont Employees: 1-888-834-2830.**

While you and your colleagues are still working before the final layoff, it is helpful to continue to support each other, to keep the work going, and to remember that whoever leaves will take with them the professionalism that they gained in this job. Another workplace will benefit from their experience.

The Layoff

After the final day, there is often a mixture of feelings, including relief that the waiting is over, and (once the reality sinks in) intermittent feelings of anger and depression. Treat yourself gently, remembering that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.

Layoffs and Loss

Knowing some of the losses associated with layoffs may help you deal with them when they show up. Some or none of these may apply to you.

- Loss of wages and benefits
- Loss of identity as a worker and provider
- Loss of self-esteem
- Loss of the “American Dream”
- Loss of trust
- Loss of the feeling of control over your life
- Loss of the pattern of daily life: Continue patterns that mimic the workday to keep you on track.
- Loss of the “work family”

Recognize that the stress of losing a job is like the stress of losing a loved one through death or divorce. Don't be surprised to feel sad, angry or depressed, and realize that this type of loss is real and often painful. Allow yourself the time and space to adjust and transition. Grieve the loss of the work that you do, and do not forget to give yourself enormous credit for the contributions that you have made to the State of Vermont in this job.

Beat the Unemployment Blues

- Be proactive; create a plan of action
- Keep a regular routine
- Keep in touch with friends; reach out for support
- Strive for emotional and physical wellness
- Create a budget and make a financial action plan
- Simplify your life

Call EAP if you would like to talk confidentially to a professional about your feelings or to help a colleague access support: **1-888-834-2830.**

Visit our website at www.vtstate.investeap.org. Password: *vteap*

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