

Never Get Laid Off Again!

By John Raye

If you still have a 9 to 5 and have never been laid off or downsized, consider yourself blessed. You are among the fortunate few. In the coming years, or months, just about everyone working today will likely experience some on-the-job turbulence. For some, it will amount to nothing more than a mild disturbance, perhaps a new assignment or new supervisors.

This will not be the case, however, for the majority of working class folk who will soon experience that awful feeling that comes with being fired. I have been fired, laid off or downsized more times than I care to remember. It is an empty, painful, unforgettable experience that can cause permanent emotional damage. It is most difficult for men, and especially Black men who come into the workplace already burdened down with past issues, deep hurts and lingering disappointments.

The greatest danger comes, however, when a man becomes defined by his job, title or position. Lose either one, and such a man is soon swallowed up in chaos and confusion. Overnight, he can become a mental train wreck, a helpless, pathetic soul wandering around lost, in a noisy mess created in the darkness of his own mind.

Some people go crazy because they lose their jobs. Some lose the will to live; others simply give up and walk away, broken and disjointed; forever disconnected from the human family. Nothing is more painful or pathetic than to encounter a man with a broken spirit. It is a most pitiful sight, closely akin to an undernourished dog too weary to eat even when food is offered.

I have seen once strong, able-bodied men reduced to shameless hucksters and shuffling derelicts all because their jobs and self-esteem disappeared at the same time. Even worse, and most unfortunate, some men haven taken the ultimate step in self-destruction by killing themselves. No matter how important, no job is worth losing your mind, your wife or your life!

Declare Your Self Worth

When you get laid off or fired, and noticed I said, when and not if... move quickly to control your emotions or else your emotions will control you. Your mind can, will often jump time, and run ahead of you. Many times this leads to a loss of focus and personal initiative. In order to avoid such a catastrophe, you must become an instant master of positive self-talk. You must begin to affirm and declare your own self-worth. Keep a close check on your emotional temperature by focusing on the positive, not the loss of your job. Losing a job is a negative reality, so do not focus on loss. Focus on success...and on winning.

Waste no time in defending or explaining your condition or situation to family or friends. It's your business, so do not make it theirs. Be upfront when asked about your situation. And while you need not go around volunteering information, do not run and hide. State the facts and move on. Make no apologies, and do not vent or showcase anger or resentment. Take the high road. Do not engage in second-guessing with yourself, and above all, do not harm yourself. You've committed no crime, you've done nothing wrong, so let all that guilt and melancholy expressions slide straight off your backside.

Stay Active

Getting fired means you have been wounded; you have taken a direct hit but neither is fatal unless you make it so. Allow yourself time to cry, to feel down, to become emotional...but only for a moment. It's alright to feel down and depressed, but you cannot stay in this condition forever. Fortify your mind with grand thoughts of power, of plenty and prosperity. Put some fire in your imagination; take action! In your mind, declare yourself unstoppable!

Your physical health is directly tied to your mental health. Therefore, do not sit and pout! Stay active! Run, walk, hike, skip, hop or jump rope---create some physical activity that will keep both your body and mind functional. Worrying is useless and a waste of precious time and energy. Find a hobby, volunteer or go work part-time, attend meetings or do anything that will keep you from sitting around the house in a deep funk.

Life is too good and too short for any of us to spend time worrying about losing a job. Inside your head is a brain; it is there to be used. It is the most powerful tool given to mankind. Surely, we have the capacity to make a job if we cannot find one!

Become Better or Become Bitter

My firing from a high profile job left a long, bitter taste in my mouth. Instead of becoming better, I became bitter, much to my own detriment. In my early career, I struggled mightily to make the grade as a television anchorman.

Though I worked extremely hard, too hard some would later say, I was ill-prepared for the rigors of daily television journalism. I simply lacked the experience, the training, the exposure, and educational background to play in the big leagues.

What I lacked in education and training however, was made up in hustle and sheer determination. But that wasn't enough and my politics as a "cause or movement man" certainly didn't help my case either. Unknowingly, I became involved in acts of self-sabotage. Unchecked anger can mess up or sidetrack anyone's career which is why you must always keep a close eye on your emotions.

Being one of the first Black television anchors in the early 70's was big time news for a recognition-starved Black community. Those of us who cracked the TV color line in the late 60's and early 70's became instant, overnight heroes. I adjusted but was never comfortable in the unsought role of community leader or spokesperson. I was thrust into that position only because of my anchor position on television.

Therefore, I became a reluctant celebrity, hounded relentlessly for autographs, money, gifts,



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and all kind of favors and requests wherever I went. My fall from the promise land of opportunity was long and hard. For a long time, I was mad, and I do mean, really mad!

It's safe to say that while I suffered much emotional trauma, I managed, nevertheless, to land on my feet largely because of an intact knowledge of self-worth. My television anchor position did not define my true nature. And I refuse to beg for my job. Deep in my gut, I knew the difference between truth and falsehood. I knew my so-called celebrity resulted mostly from the TV, a deceptive, artificial instrument of mass confusion; it did not reflect my true nature. I knew you could put a chicken or a frog in the same anchor position, and both would soon become instant celebrities also.

Time Heals Everything

In my day, reality television did not exist and thanks to a solid background in character education, I managed to survive both segregation and the hellish conditions that follow it. I did not lose my mind, and did not compromise my integrity, either. I knew exactly who I was, and was very comfortable with my background. I never felt ashamed of my condition or surroundings. For sure, I didn't like those conditions but I would not hate or dislike myself because of poor living conditions. In my community, poverty was an equal opportunity resident. Everybody had a whole lot of nothing!

But being fired, however, left me dazed and severely shaken. I had some real low moments, some painful moments of serious doubt and uncertainty but giving up was never an option. When you have no job, no money, and no prospects of getting any, your mind can really start messing with you! I survived, for example, several bouts with depression, and all kind of crazy thoughts went through my head. But, I held on. I got tired but I wouldn't quit; I wouldn't give up! The demons tried but couldn't get me!

Make Use Of Your Secret Weapon

And truth be told, it is only by grace that I am still here! And I need to say this also; I prayed a whole lot! When you can't do anything else and don't know what to do; be still and pray! Prayer is your trump card, your ace of spades; it will always bring you through! Always know it is your secret weapon!

It took a good five years for me to heal myself. Instead of staying bitter, I worked on getting better. You cannot get bitter and better at the same time. One or the other must prevail, and so I decided that feeling better was much better than feeling bitter. I had more energy when I felt better, less energy when I felt bitter. And time, I can happily report, heals all wounds. Time enabled me to outgrow my bitterness.

Let Go Of Stuff And Mess

I've learn to let go of things that are beyond my control. I stay clear of stuff and mess. I remove myself from messy situations, and erase mess and messed up people from my consciousness. Most of all, I did not, and will not, allow my past to become a prisoner in my future.

I accept as fact that some degree of stuff and mess will always show up in our lives. This is a given, but stuff and mess should never consume our every waking moment. Much of it can be eliminated or reduced simply by recognizing it for what it is; stuff and mess!

When you live a life based on purpose and principle, you never need worry about being laid off or dismissed because a purpose-driven man will always find another opportunity. When you begin to move, act and live in your true purpose, your life takes on an entirely new meaning. The universe opens up and responds to your every need.

For example, when one door of opportunity is closed, another opens automatically and immediately, but only for the individual whose level of emotional maturity is such that he knows where to look. Sudden adversity forces the average person to look outside for help. Shell-shocked and gripped by fear, he quickly succumbs to the demons of doubt and uncertainty, not realizing that all security, all success and all prosperity are to be found within. And real power, like real success, also originates from within.

When touched by adversity, most people are too shook up to consider the relevancy of self-employment. However, self-employment is a good thing because self-employed people do not allow themselves to be laid off or downsized. More and more, our knowledge-based economy is giving way to self-employed individuals. Self-employment, in fact, is the hallmark of the new marketplace.

This move is being fueled by rapid technological changes which, in the future, are destined to change in size, speed and complexity. Outsourcing of goods, products and services opens new doors of opportunity for resourceful individuals. This enables them to enjoy multiple streams of income!

Add Value To Yourself

The best way to avoid the sting and stench of being fired or laid off is to create, or course, your own job or security blanket. You already have the tools, all the necessary resources to create your own opportunity. If self-employment is beyond your scope, then consider becoming a peak performer by adding value where you work; make this a top priority. Become value-proof, that is, become so valuable that catastrophic and irreplaceable losses would occur if you were ever separated from the company.

Peak performers or high value employees need not worry about layoffs. Generally speaking, people who add value to a company's bottom line are usually well-regarded and also well-rewarded. Protect and enhance your future by becoming too valuable for the lay-off pool!

Keep in mind that high value people or peak performers always have options unavailable to the rank and file. They can always hire themselves! Which is exactly what I did!

And, I must add, it's the best job I've ever had! I followed the advice of a Tennessee community college president who once declared; "the best job you will ever have is the one you create for yourself." Now, that ain't nothing but the truth!

—John Raye, author of "Make Yourself Great: Inspiration For Dark Days And Long Nights", hosts the "John Raye Show", every Saturday, 11:30pm, PAX-TV. Reach him at johnraye@matah.com or (336) 996-4704