

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

January 13, 2009

This Week's Message:

**Helping A Laid Off
Spouse or Friend.**

Paths Forward

**Tired of boring
meetings??**

Resources

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Helping A Laid Off Spouse or Friend.

Getting laid off is a major loss in a number of ways. It can be seen as a career setback, it certainly can be a financial burden, it is a blow to one's ego and it can negatively affect personal relationships. Spouses, partners and friends who want to help are often not sure of just what to do. They want to be supportive while not making the job-hunt the major focus of the relationship.

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If your spouse has been laid off you may first have to deal with your own negative emotions about the event before you can be of much help. It is only natural for you to feel angry, or disappointed or depressed or fearful about the future. Talking about these feelings with your spouse can be helpful if it reinforces that you are both "on the same page" emotionally. But once this has been achieved it is better to leave the topic alone than risk being seen as adding to your spouse's burdens. He or she already feels bad enough without you constantly reinforcing the negative side of things - especially about an event that is now in your past. After all, this unemployment is only a temporary setback no matter how uncertain the future looks at the moment.

If your friend has been laid off you may feel a bit guilty or even relieved that you still have a job. These feelings can be amplified if your friend was also a co-worker. You may have a ton of ideas for your friend to pursue but not know how to broach the subject without overstepping boundaries or saying the wrong thing. Trust me, the only completely wrong thing to say is nothing. As soon as the opportunity presents itself tell your friend that as soon as he or she is ready to start the job hunt that you are available for ideas, contacts and support.

The two ideas above will help get you past the immediate event. But the job hunt can be a long and demanding road. Here are some more ideas to help you support your unemployed spouse, partner or friend stay on an even keel while searching for a new job.

Paths Forward

• **Feelings Are Varied And Variable.** The laid off job hunter may feel energized one day and defeated the next. She may be angry with her old boss in the morning, excited about an upcoming interview at noon and embarrassed about being unemployed by 5 PM. A job loss can trigger the grief process which ranges from denial, anger, sadness, bargaining and eventually to acceptance. And my experience with hundreds and hundreds of job seekers is that job loss grief isn't a one-way street; the emotions do not always arrive in "proper" sequence and they can easily erupt again even if previously experienced. Unless you are psychic it is next to impossible to predict how a job hunter is feeling on any one day - UNLESS YOU ASK! No one is suggesting that you host a pity party but understanding where the other person is emotionally can guide your efforts to be of assistance.

• **Value The Person, Not The Job.** Do not allow the job hunt to become the focus of your relationship. Do not make the job hunt the center of every conversation. This person is your spouse because of his or her wonderful personal qualities not because of what *used* to be printed on a business card. This person is your friend because of the pleasure you take in his or her company not because of a *former* position in the organizational food chain. Your spouse or friend may need to have this fact reinforced now more than ever. Don't be shy about sharing why and how you value this person.

• **Offer Help.** Ask how you can help with the job search. This can be scanning for published openings, making referrals to recruiters, sharing valuable job hunting books, or making introductions via your network. Offer assistance at regular intervals but do not force the point. Constantly offering to help may be seen as nagging which is counterproductive. Your spouse may feel awkward with your network. Your friend may be unaware of the scope of your job-hunting expertise. Perhaps the best help you can give is as a sounding board, a sympathetic ear, or somebody with whom to share a matinee movie. Anybody can be supportive with someone in a good mood; remember that you'll have to try a little harder when the person you're helping is having a bad day - and there will be a few.

• **Fight Isolation.** Being laid off is nothing to be ashamed of but some job hunters feel that way and want to retreat from society. Try not to let this happen. Get the job hunter out as much as practical to counter this social isolation. Meetings of

social or civic groups and professional and trade associations are great places to network. Family gatherings can sometimes also offer similar opportunities. If you care about a job hunter try to keep him or her socially active because it will help not only with contacts but also with both attitude and energy.

• **Finance Issues.** If your spouse is unemployed ease up on spending. Sharpen your pencil and look at your budget for practical reductions without making a major issue of it. Often there are unresolved questions about such issues as delayed compensation, reimbursement of expenses, payment for vacation days, transferring retirement accounts or COBRA health insurance coverage and many of these come with mandated deadlines. But your unemployed spouse may never want to interact with his / her former employer again. Thus, you may have to subtly phrase your willingness to help here as a matter of "only getting what you've already earned" or "collecting what you are entitled to".

• **Don't Ask.** One question that every job hunter hates to hear is "Did you find a job yet?" So don't ask. Occasionally ask if there is anything you can do to help but don't ask constantly and don't let it become the focus of your relationship. The pleasure the job hunter takes in your company may well be as a respite from thinking about the job search or worrying about finances or obsessing about tomorrow's interview. It's better to let him or her raise the topic so you can respond with yet another vote of confidence and yet another offer to help however you can.

Life Map is about reaching out to those around you to help them achieve the job and career they want and deserve.

Tired of boring meetings??

Have Dr. Paul speak at your next off-site meeting or conference. Fast-moving, practical, motivating presentations from an acknowledged leader in the field of career and personal success.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/speakingchedule.html>

Resources

Someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?

To order the best, concise, all-round job changing guide available. *"Winning Job Interviews: Reduce Interview Anxiety, Outprepare the Other Candidates, Land the Job You Love"* by Dr. Paul Powers, click the link below.

Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? To order your copy of *"Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding a Job You Love"* by Dr. Paul Powers, click the link below.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksarticles.html>

Have an issue or question you'd like Dr. Paul to address in a future edition? Send an email to the email address list below.

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Sincerely,

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