

Self Confidence, Job Loss and Anxiety

Your confidence inevitably takes a knock when you lose your job – whatever the reason. What I'm going to describe is my version of what I believe you are going through, how it affects you, how it may affect your family or loved ones and what you can do about rebuilding your self-confidence.

Job loss is increasingly common – what with cheaper labour in the developing world, new powerful economies such as China and the vagaries of management teams who reassure you all the way to the exit.

If you lose your job through no fault of your own the stresses are almost as powerful as going through a divorce or going to jail. It is one of the most stressful things any person can go through, yet not everybody will feel the same things or react in the same way.

When other people have not gone through what you have gone through or are going through they **CANNOT** possibly understand what you are feeling. Incidentally this also applies to people who are close to us; people who you feel should understand and support you, but they are often affected differently by what has happened to you.

Your pain and anguish is real, your sense of loss tangible.

Your position is similar to bereavement, your job was no doubt a large part of you; some would say your job almost becomes your identity and so often we introduce ourselves with “Hello I'm a finance manager...”

Sadly the reaction of many people who are supposed to be able to help you, including professional advisors is filtered by their lack of understanding or empathy. If they haven't been there they don't **REALLY** know what it looks and feels like.

In my case I've been there not once but twice so it's become more familiar than I would have liked, yet this familiarity is what allows me to offer you some encouragement and advice.

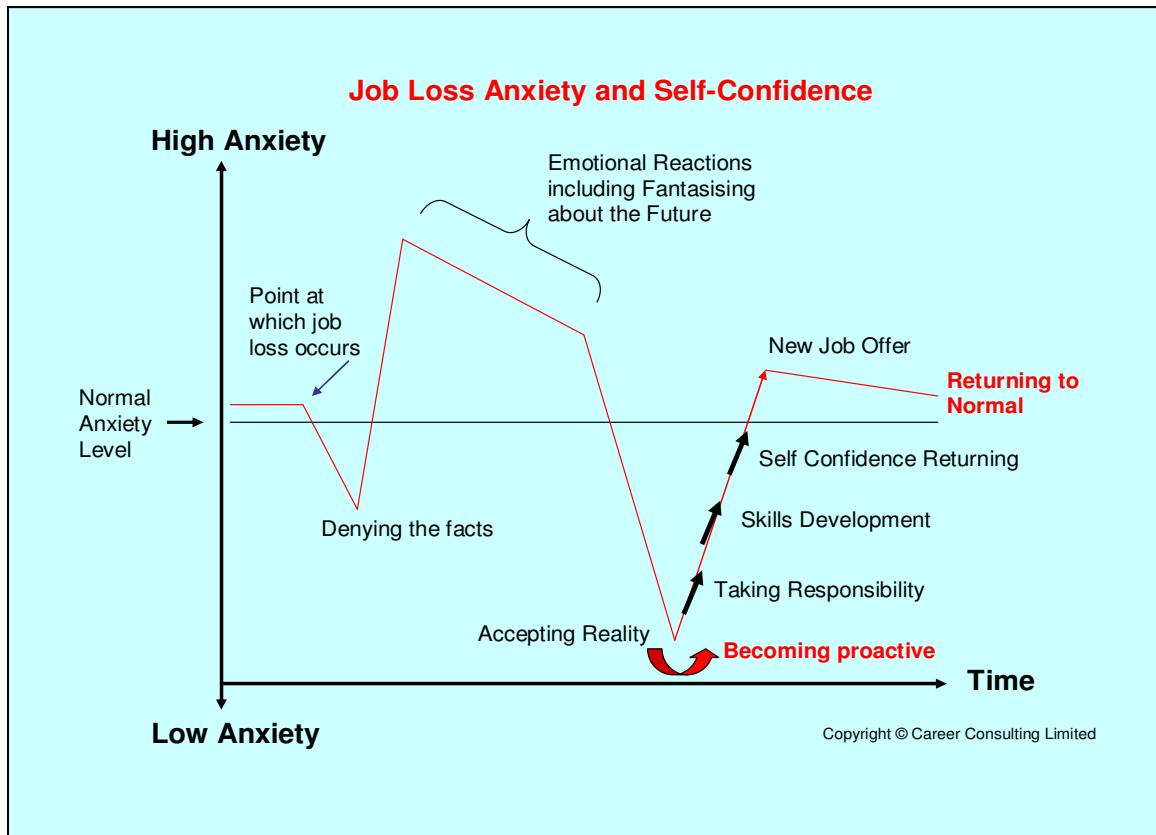
Quite often we develop a sort of sixth sense that tells us that job loss is about to occur. The first time it happened to me the directors continued to reassure us that although the business was underperforming, our area which was very successful would be spared from any takeover and our jobs would be safe. Only on the day that the deal had gone through did we learn that a stronger competitor had bought the business and was about to strip the assets. Although it was described as a “people business” we, the people were all made redundant.

So even up to the point of learning about our job loss, we all felt that our futures were secure. When this proved to be a lie I felt utterly betrayed. I felt so badly let down that I wept with frustration. The despair for my future could not have been worse. If these are your feelings you will understand how I felt.

Looking back, I recognise that my sixth sense had told me it would happen, but I was able to convince myself that it wouldn't so the shock was still intense.

Once the news came out though, I was surprised to feel some relief; the inner turmoil of will it – won't it had gone and at least I now knew where I stood. If you are like me you will recognise this feeling which is often followed quickly by **“WHAT DO I DO NOW?”**

The chart below shows the “ups and downs” that I expect you will recognise. The line through the middle of the chart shows where your anxiety level would normally be. The red line shows what usually happens when someone experiences job loss and shows the “highs and lows” associated with the time moving through this transition.



When you start saying “**WHAT DO I DO NOW**” you may find that you pull all sorts of unfulfilled dreams out of your mind – after all you are now **FREE** and can do anything that you wanted to do but never had the opportunity. It quite buoys you up for a while – the world is your oyster – and the possibilities seem endless. You feel excited. But it doesn’t last.

After this period of elation wears off, which it will, you may find that the anticipated new future doesn’t look as enticing and feel that you really can’t be bothered to make the effort to do something new. You may feel that your age or your gender or your skills are against you getting a new opportunity so why make the effort and end up disappointed.

All the while your family are saying you’ll just have to go and get another job – easier said than done – and it can feel that they are being critical of your efforts or lack of effort.

What can you do if it gets to this stage?

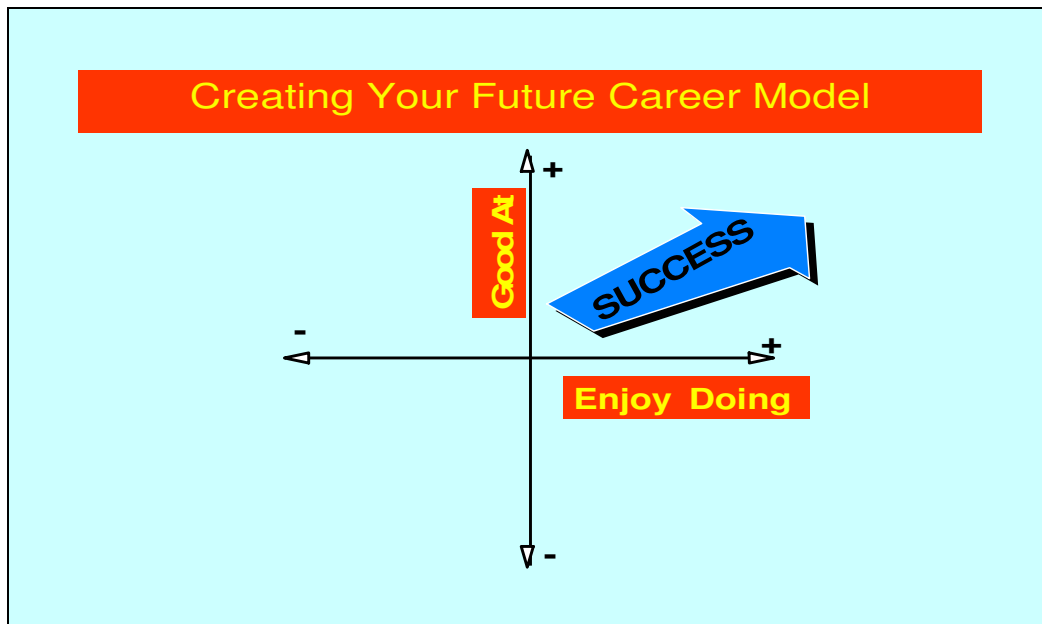
Having been there myself, I want to tell you this is all perfectly normal and natural. It's as if you **HAVE** to go through these emotions before you can start trying again. I also want to reassure you that the job loss was not your fault, it would have happened whatever you did and that **YOU STILL HAVE THE SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES YOU HAD THE DAY BEFORE JOB LOSS.**

Let me repeat that:

You still have the same skills and attributes that they employed you for, what has changed is the way **YOU** feel about things.

So if your skills and personal attributes were valued previously and they have not changed or been taken away, then **YOU STILL HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER.**

What I'd like you to think about is starting something again but based on what you enjoy doing as well as being something you are good at.



This way you more readily get the successful result you want and need, as the chart above shows.

If you can accept the reality of this, you can begin to take back control for your own sake, not for others' and start to decide where you want your future to be.

None of this in any way diminishes what you are and have been going through, only you truly know what it has cost you emotionally, yet if you can turn the corner you can make your future your own again.

What you should do at this time is **LOOK AFTER YOURSELF.**

Try to avoid excesses in eating, drinking alcohol, smoking or caffeine intake. You will concentrate better if you take some exercise and get regular sleep. Don't hide away from social contacts – they may be good listeners or sources of information – and keep up with your interests. Focusing on job loss or job search all the time keeps you in too narrow a frame and can prevent you from seeing possibilities when they present themselves.

When you are ready to take action and responsibility for that action and only when you are ready, you can start to see what you might need to do.

Incidentally, this sounds like a straight line from A to B to C – it isn't and I'm not suggesting it is. You know that each day is different and some days will feel like it's only just happened, but please keep going.

When you are ready – and it will come – take stock of what you've got and what you might need to do or learn to get you back into play. If you're not sure what to do, go to this section of my website: <http://www.your-career-change.com/career-options.html> where you will get more ideas of how to proceed and what to do.

One of my past clients was the husband in a professional couple. He received his notice of redundancy just at the time when his wife was preparing to go back to work. Although a qualified solicitor she had not worked while bringing up their two children. She was so excited to be returning to the career she had put on hold and was the focus of attention in her household as she made her preparations. Then the bombshell dropped, **HE** was being made redundant. Suddenly the focus switched from her to him and a certain amount of resentment built up which made **BOTH** their lives difficult for a time.

Other client's spouses and partners are simply spectators watching the drama unfold as you try to get things together. Because they don't see everything you do, they will ask questions because they care and are worried and this can feel like criticism but generally it isn't meant to be, so you must try to understand that.

You will gradually feel more confident and start to be sure of your future; this confidence will feed into your actions and help you to secure the job you want.

This is rarely a short term problem, some people may take weeks to go through the transition and many others will take months. Some will feel as if they have got through and find themselves back at the start again only to repeat it all.

But take my word – you will get through. You may well come out a stronger person and you even think that it was a good thing that happened.

My very best wishes

Peter Fisher

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