

The 3 Most Valuable Lessons I Learned After Being Laid Off



It was a Wednesday, my Dad's 70 birthday, but that's not why the day is memorable. I walked into work and headed to my desk, like any other day. The first item on my calendar was a meeting with my boss. I headed downstairs, opened the door and right away - - I knew. There was HR sitting next to my boss. Both had very serious expressions on their faces. The company had gone through several lay offs in the past few years and today was my turn.

A few minutes later, I was packing up my desk. As I sorted through 11 years worth of "stuff," I realized that just moments earlier all these files, papers and emails that had been such a big part of my life, that had taken up so much of my time and energy, now meant nothing. It was like an out-of-body experience. How quickly life can change. But there's more...

Instead of looking for another job in the same field, I decided it was time to try something totally new; a reinvention. It was time to start my own business in a totally different area. I went from corporate employee at a large biotech company with a nice salary and benefits to entrepreneur speaker and consultant with none of the above. Over the next several weeks and months, I had many conversations with myself and with that nagging fear of "Will this actually work?" and "What the heck am I doing?"

During this journey, I have learned 3 incredibly valuable lessons that have made my days less stressful and more enjoyable and I believe they could be helpful to anyone who has lost their job.

Being laid off gives us the gift of a “pause.”

Our normal working life is usually going full tilt, packed full of busyness that pushes us down our current path. There is rarely an opportunity to pause, reflect, and ask, “Is this the life I want?” “Am I happy in my current situation?” “What do I really want to be when I grow up?” After I was laid off, I suddenly had the time to ask these questions and realized there were opportunities and possibilities out there I had never considered before.

There are two kinds of worry.

We can worry about things totally out of our control. Things like the cost of health insurance and the unemployment rate. This worry is an energy drain and a total waste of time. The second kind of worry is – you guessed it! – focused on things we CAN do something about. If we worry about what kinds of opportunities are out there we can channel this energy into action and start gathering information. If we worry that it’s going to take a lot of time and energy to get another job, we can use it as motivation to work hard at networking and sending in resumes.

No matter what happens, we will learn from this.

One of the biggest challenges after losing a job is the unknown future. How long will it take to get another job? Will I like it? Will I have to relocate? Not knowing how things are going to turn out is very stressful! If only we had a crystal ball and could see that we will find a great job in the next 6 months! Then we could relax and feel confident that all is well. The realization that had the biggest impact on reducing my stress was that no matter what happened in the future, I would learn from it and gain valuable experience in the process. This mindset has made it possible for me to enjoy my extra time at home with my family instead of being bogged down with stress and worry at every moment.

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