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Title:

Unemployment Blues: Life Changing Events

Word Count:

818

Summary:

If we are unlucky enough to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, we experience a personal tsunami - a misfortune of devastating proportions that sweeps away our routine lifestyle and forever changes the world we know.

Keywords:

unemployment,job search,careers,support,psychological reframing,

Article Body:

If we are unlucky enough to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, we experience a personal tsunami - a misfortune of devastating proportions that sweeps away our routine lifestyle and forever changes the world we know.

Yet despite the frequency of such events - the tidal waves of Asia, the hurricanes of the Gulf Coast, the loss of life in the Middle East, the wildfires and mudslides of California - most of us are only indirectly affected. We bleed for those who have lost everything, give what we can out of our pocketbooks and our hearts, but our world is essentially unchanged and we move along in our personal life journey relatively unscathed.

The vast majority of us will never undergo the wrenching jolt of a major disaster, natural or man-made. The sheer size of the human race insulates millions of us from the floods, the bombs, and the mayhem. For us, the life-changing events we experience never hit the front page. Personal, quiet disasters - divorce, death, bankruptcy, or unemployment - change our lives forever but remain unnoticed by all but our closest friends and family. We pick up the pieces and try to get it together without government or private succor and support.

It is the isolation of personal loss that is so emotional destructive. We struggle alone to try to make sense of what went wrong and how we can recover our equilibrium.

Others are sympathetic and wish us well but there is an abyss between those who have a job and those who cannot find one. The longer we are out of work, the more alienated we become. Even those who love us start to worry that there's something wrong with us. They start to suspect that we're not as motivated as we say we are. Everyone has plenty of glib advice: "Have you tried . . . ?" Of course we have -many times and always without success. We become more disheartened as we analyze everything we've done and realize we have tried every trick in the book and still cannot find anything suitable.

Some of us get stuck in depression, anger, or paralyzing anxiety. Our energy drains away and even the smallest action becomes more and more difficult. As frustration and financial pressures mount, we wallow in the unfairness of it all and reminisce about how perfect everything was when we had a job and a future and hope, wondering why all this had to happen.

As with hurricanes and tsunamis and terrorism, the victims are not responsible for the catastrophe they face. Life-changing events do just that - change our lives, sometimes forever. Change can be negative, fear-provoking, and desperately uncomfortable. But, if we look closer, we'll see it also has a positive face. Without change, our modern world wouldn't exist. We would be living the way our ancestors did. And while olden times may sound attractive in their pristine simplicity, such times were filled with disease, inequality and a raw brutality we could not stomach today. We need to embrace change and, despite the turmoil it brings, look for the silver lining hidden within the storm clouds.

Although you now remember your job with nostalgic affection, there were undoubtedly times that you wished you could quit. Even if you loved what you were doing, any single job position only taps into a small part of your potential. Being forced to make a change allows you to develop other domains of your personal character.

Try to analyze your interests and preferences and identify things you would like to do which have not been utilized by your prior jobs. Can you think of an industry or a particular job title that might allow you to move in a new direction? Think about, and complete some preliminary research on, jobs in new industries that you might be able to do. You may not have directly related experience but there are common themes that permeate every kind of work: the ability to communicate, to work as part of a team, to learn rapidly, to be aware of details, to organize and prioritize. If you pick an area of genuine personal interest, you enthusiasm will clearly and naturally emerge and that is something all employers seek.

The job hunting you have been doing may, without your realizing it, have become routine and uninspired. The experience of failure and the frustration of never receiving positive feedback may have led to your merely "going through the motions," already convinced, in your own mind, of the futility of your efforts.

Taking a new direction can open up your job search tunnel. Instead of beating your head against the wall and revisiting every technique and lead you've tried before, moving into a different environment may give you a new sense of purpose and appreciation of your own potential. That is when the positive effects of forced change can become a new source of pleasure and satisfaction.