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# Coping with Sudden Unemployment

A LIFE EFFECTIVENESS GUIDE

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# Introduction

Unfortunately 'organisational restructuring' and 'downsizing' are common events in today's workplace. For those individuals who suddenly lose their job, financial pressures can be overwhelming. Most support individuals receive focus on supporting the individual financially. However even under the best conditions where someone has ample savings and decent job prospects, suddenly losing a job is an emotional ride.

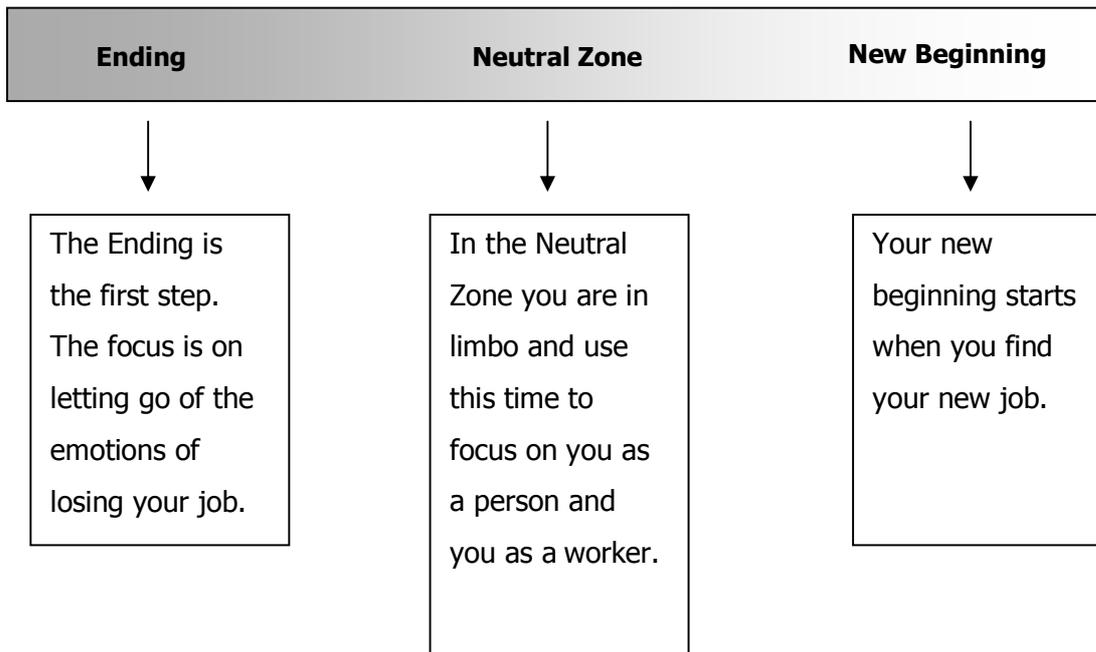
The emotional stress which individuals and their families experience is the least thought about effect of unemployment. For many people work is a central component to their identity. When their employment status changes, so too can their self identity. This together with the financial strain can be a very stressful and negative time.

If you have recently lost your job, you might need to focus on two issues. Firstly you need to look at your financial situation. You may need to rewrite your budget, apply for assistance, and talk to your bank manager or a financial advisor. Once you have initiated this, you then need to focus some time and energy on the emotional stress you are experiencing. You do this for two reasons:

1. You are currently experiencing change. Change can be difficult to deal with when it is planned, however in situations such as sudden unemployment, your stress levels and emotions can skyrocket.
2. You are starting a transition period. Transitions can either be negative or positive experiences. If you are proactive in your transition, you are more likely to have a positive experience with a more successful outcome.

Let's start by looking at the three stages of your transition.

Transitions involve an 'End' of one situation (your previous job); a 'Neutral Zone' where you adjust and prepare for the 'New Beginning' (your new job). (Bridges, 1998).



This booklet assists you in the first two stages of your transition. By using a strength-based focus, you will be using a combination of self-assessment, reflection activities and goal -setting to lay the foundations to begin the search for your new career.

This booklet is divided into five sections:

Section 1: Reactions and emotions

Section 2: What is right for you?

Section 3: Self-esteem

Section 4: Focusing on the job

Section 5: Your new beginning

When working through this booklet there are no right or wrong answers as you are the expert on your own feelings and needs. However, the more time and effort you give to the activities the more you will gain from them.

# Reactions and Emotions

Every situation we encounter evokes a reaction and emotions. This usually only becomes a problem when the reactions and emotions we experience are unpleasant. In this first section you will be focusing on your experience of being suddenly unemployed by addressing the following four points:

1. Acknowledge that you are experiencing strong and sometimes unpleasant reactions and emotions
2. Identify what these reactions and emotions are
3. Accept that these are natural reactions and emotions
4. Commit to the idea that these reactions and emotions will not allow you to wallow in the one spot.

## Reactions

At the point where you were told that your current job was no longer available, it is highly likely that you reacted in one of the following four ways:

- **Disbelief**

Retrenched? How could they? I won't allow it. I've given the last five years of my life to this organisation. I'll go over your head and discuss this with the boss! Your reaction is to refuse to accept the situation.

- **Escape**

Shock! I don't believe it! I'm getting out of here. I cannot tolerate what is occurring, so I'll escape from the situation and leave. Flight.

- **Euphoria**

That's all right. I understand. I will agree with whatever you say. I've always done so in the past. You are probably so highly geared you will agree with anything. After all, the boss will look after you as he has done in the past. Keep agreeing and all will be well. Regrettably, it won't be, and you must accept the facts.



Employment changes are losses and need to be recognized as such. As with any loss, you may experience varying degrees of sadness and grief. Trying to move on without recognizing and dealing with these feelings will make your job search very difficult.

The following **emotions** are common during this time:

- **Anger**

You have just had your job taken from you and you feel really mad. Don't they realize that the new scheme you implemented won't run without you? Who's going to write the new computer program? Is this all the thanks you get?

- **Fear**

How will you cope? Who is going to pay the mortgage, the children's school fees, buy the food and pay all the bills? You have this horrible sinking feeling in your stomach and you think you're finished. You can only think of only the worst.

- **Sadness**

The loss of a job is like the loss of a loved one and you feel sad, very sad.

- **Shame**

It's your fault. You lost your job and it cannot be replaced. You should have seen it coming and taken evasive action, but you didn't. How would you be such a failure?

- **Self pity**

It wasn't your fault. You don't deserve to be treated like this and it's not fair. Why have you been picked on? Why not somebody else? That's all the thanks you get!

(Trevor-Roberts, 2004)



# What Is Right For You?

This section will focus on three areas:

1. Finding balance in your life
2. Identifying your values
3. Completing 'The Personality Need Type Profile'

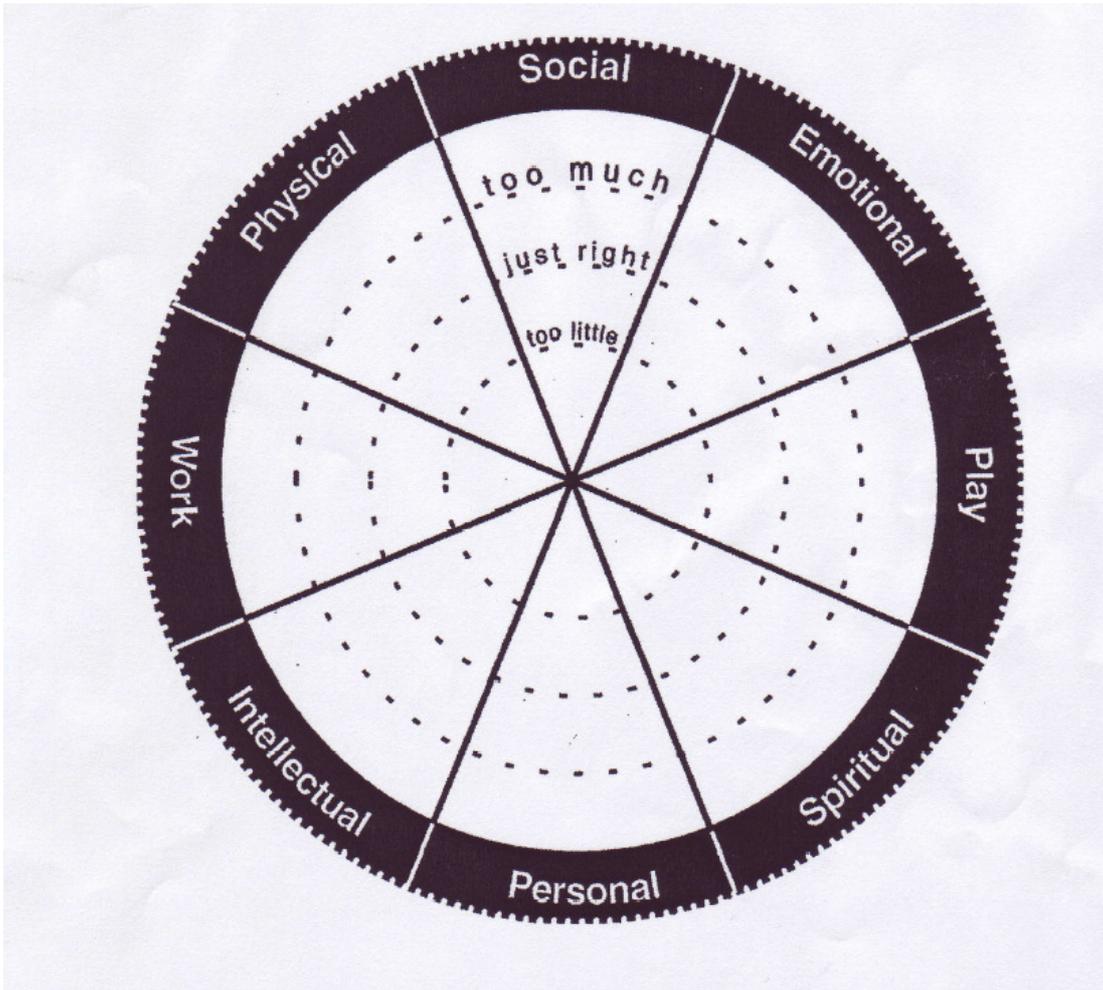
There is no right or wrong answers for these three exercises. However, the more truthful you are, the more you will learn about yourself!

## **A Balanced Approach**

To achieve a successful career it is important to have a balanced life. This means you need to invest time in all areas of your life, not just work. This is a good time to take a more holistic approach and re-visit how all parts of your life are going.

### **Exercise:**

*The circle on the next page contains eight segments, each representing an important part of your life. For each segment, (1) draw a solid line for where you want to be and (2) draw a dotted line where you are in terms of progress, effort and time invested.*



(Amundson, 2003 cited in Trevor-Roberts, 2004)

*Reflecting on where you represented yourself in each segment, consider how you will maintain or improve your situation. Now make a list of goals in each of these dimensions in your life and ways you can achieve them.*

1. Work - paid or unpaid

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2. Play – hobbies, interests – what you like to do in your own time

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3. Personal - time for yourself only

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4. Social - time in others company

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5. Intellectual – mind challenging activities, problem solving, information gathering

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6. Emotional – activities that encourage the expression and experience of feelings that help to develop ideas about the world – sympathy and empathy

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7. Physical – taking care of yourself and body

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8. Spiritual – knowing your place in the world and with your surroundings.

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**This is not just a pen to paper exercise. You need to revisit your goals on a regular basis and work towards achieving them.**

# Values

Some values remain consistent over a lifetime, others may change significantly. This opportunity allows you to reassess your values and outline what is important to you. People whose careers are closely matched to their lifestyles are more likely to find their job fulfilling and attain higher job satisfaction.

Complete the following value checklist by ticking the column which most reflects you:

## Value Checklist

Values	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Being Free			
Helping others			
Making money			
Working outdoors			
Having a steady job			
Having people respect me			
Having my kind of lifestyle			
Opportunity to learn			
Working regular hours			
Achieving my creative potential			
Experiencing career fulfillment			
Working with people I like			
Doing technical work			
Putting my personal life ahead of my job			
Living where I want to live			
Exhibiting leadership			

(Chapman, 1988)

My three 'most important' values are:

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Have your 'most important' values changed or remain constant over the years?

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## The Personality Need Type Profile

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*This exercise explores further the type of person you are and your personality needs. Simply tick either the left or right column, depending of which statement most reflects you and follow the instructions below.*

## The Personality Need Type Profile

### Part A: Completing the Profile

Do you consider yourself as being:

More Dominant	( )	More Passive	( )
More Gets Your Way	( )	More Accepting	( )
More Bold	( )	More Retiring	( )
More Boastful	( )	More Modest	( )
More Tough	( )	More Sensitive	( )
More Assertive	( )	More Going Along	( )
More Independent	( )	Likes People Around	( )
More Overbearing	( )	More Reserved	( )
More Pushy	( )	More Subservient	( )
More Forceful	( )	More Docile	( )
More Aggressive	( )	More Complacent	( )
More Enthusiastic	( )	More Following	( )

Total (Left-Hand Column Only): \_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider yourself as being:

More Informal	( )	More Formal	( )
More Friendly	( )	More Impersonal	( )
More Lively	( )	More Inactive	( )

More Playful	( )	More Quiet	( )
More Impulsive	( )	More Serious	( )
More Spontaneous	( )	More Planful	( )
More Casual	( )	More Careful	( )
More Disorganized	( )	More Organized	( )
More Warm	( )	More Distant	( )
More Flexible	( )	More Inflexible	( )
More People-Orientated	( )	More Task-Orientated	( )
More Outgoing	( )	More Keeping To Self	( )

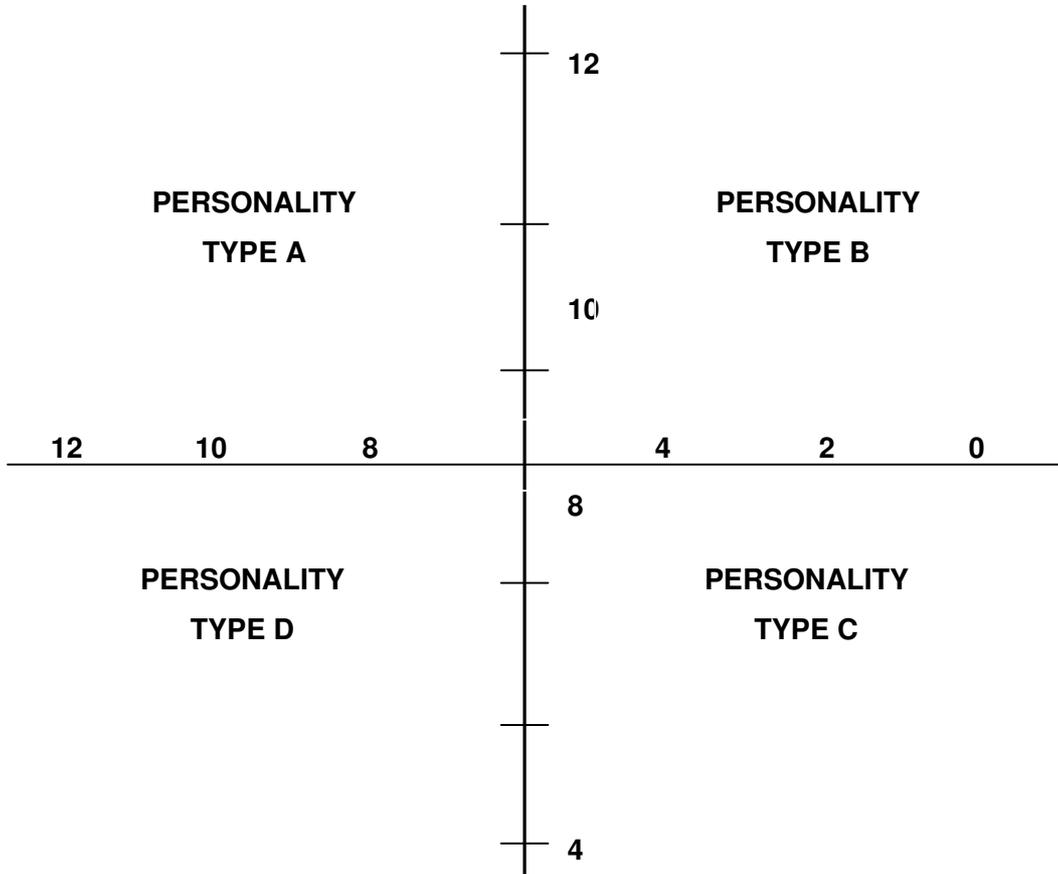
Total (Left-Hand Column Only): \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B: Scoring the Profile**

*Instructions: First, total the score in the Left-Hand Column Only of the first set of comparisons and onto the horizontal line by circling the corresponding number. Now, total the score in the in the Left-Hand Column Only of the second set of comparisons onto the vertical line by circling the corresponding score number. Extend lines at right angles from the scores that you have circled until the lines meet. You will then have a reference point (the point of intersection) in one of four Personality Need Type areas.*

*Note: The score indicated on the horizontal line, is representative of a person's tendency to be either dominant or passive. The score indicated on the vertical line is representative of the person's degree of socialisation and is thus expressed in the terms of Informal or Formal behavioural predispositions.*

**THE PERSONALITY NEED TYPE INDICATOR**



## **Type 'A' Behaviour and Needs**

Persons who generally demonstrate observable Type A Behaviour may be described as having stronger needs for self-recognition and, therefore, their behaviour and their needs would be described as following:

### **General behaviour**

- Enjoys being the centre of attention
- May spend a lot of time on self- presentation
- May not work well in groups, but may when it involves reporting
- Tend to be dominating and controlling

### **At work**

- Tends to work better on short-term projects
- May not work well in groups but does enjoy reporting
- May need regular encouragement to keep interested
- Excellent performer where personal skills are needed

### **In social life**

- Likes to be the centre of attention
- Would probably have interests where he/she can be 'seen' to do well
- May sometimes come across as being ungracious
- Will often be the life of the party and a great entertainer
- Will probably be the one who arrives last and is best dressed

### **In love**

- Needs to be flattered, and is proud and passionate
- Could not handle criticism or being relegated to second place
- Demanding of attention and probably domineering
- Do not expect attention when this person is otherwise occupied

## **Type 'B' Behaviour and Needs**

Persons who generally demonstrate observable Type B Behaviour may be described as having stronger needs for social involvement and therefore their behaviour and their needs would be described as following:

### **General behaviour**

- Tends to be outgoing, social and friendly
- Usually needs the company of other people
- Usually accepting of other people and their ideas
- May appear a little unconventional and not very serious

### **At work**

- Works best on group projects
- Usually does not like directing the activities of others
- Usually is well liked and has noticeable skills in the interpersonal areas. Do not isolate this person from the group and expect performance
- May go to work just for the social involvement

### **In social life**

- Normally dresses carefully for the occasion
- Enjoys a well organised and active social life
- Usually a good entertainer at home and an interesting guest
- Keeps up with the latest trends and fashions

### **In love**

- May be flirtatious even if just for fun
- May appear humorous and light hearted
- Often undemonstrative in his/her love life
- Could need a lot of entertaining and will expect to be looked after
- Likes theatres and restaurants rather than candles at home

## **Type 'C' Behaviour and Needs**

Persons who generally demonstrate observable type C behaviour may be described as having stronger needs for security and therefore, their behaviour and their needs would be described as follows:

### **In general**

- Generally keeps in the background
- Although not loud, does like having others around
- This person is generally loyal and dependable
- Often quiet and unassuming
- Do not expect this person to be an instant decision maker

### **At work**

- Is detail-minded and could hold two jobs to save money
- Is persevering and does not mind how much work he/she is given
- Does not particularly enjoy reporting
- Works well on long-term projects
- Will be there on wet days and with the flu

### **In social life**

- Enjoys a balance between social and private activities
- Usually dresses conservatively between social and private activities
- Acceptance by other people is very important to this person
- Usually has well developed but conservative social graces

### **In love**

- If you are looking for someone to support you, look no further
- May be looking for a friend rather than a lover
- Usually faithful and devoted
- Always there when needed
- Usually a reliable and stable mate

## **Type 'D' Behaviour and Needs**

Persons who generally demonstrate observable Type D Behaviour may be described as having stronger needs for self-fulfillment and, therefore, their behaviour and their needs would be described as follows:

### **In general**

- Tends to be very individualistic, preserving and achievement orientated
- Often interesting and forward thinking
- Does not know what second place is
- Extremely competitive
- Usually speaks well and forcefully
- Tends naturally to take control

### **At work**

- Displays a high degree of creativity and enthusiasm
- Prefers to work alone and is not a group person
- Thinks the office parties are a waste of time
- Usually has the job done while others are thinking about it
- Try to involve at the planning stage

### **In social life**

- Is generally very conservative
- Usually does not enjoy large crowds or noisy places
- Prefers to be with small groups of like-minded people
- Not the most snappy dresser in the world
- Usually does not have good people skills

### **In love**

- Romantic and passionate
- Often loves blindly and makes the total commitment
- There is only one partner in the world (his/hers)
- Enjoys the intimate dinner for two



# Self-Esteem

*"When I can no longer proudly say 'I am a mechanic' my self-esteem gradually wastes away. I meet a stranger and admit that I am unemployed, perhaps have been for an extended period of time and I feel that my stature diminishes from the look in their eyes. I talk about what I used to do but I feel somehow tainted and incomplete. I talk too much about why I have no job because I want them to realize that it's not my fault, that I really want to work and there nothing wrong with me".*

Losing your job suddenly can really play on your mind, and the facts of the situation can become blurred. Statements starting with "I should have worked more over time..." or "If I had handled things differently then....." are negative mental tapes running inside your head. These need to be stopped or you will start questioning your worth and gradually lower your self-esteem.

At this stage of your transition it is important for you to maintain a good level of self identity and self esteem for the following reasons:

People with poor self-esteem are more likely to:

- Give up easily
- Avoid new situations
- Be super-critical of their own efforts
- Think it's bad to make mistakes
- Feel inadequate to handle new situations
- Get upset when they are criticized
- Worry about what others think or say
- Criticize or blame others
- Put down their own talents, possessions and achievements
- Gossip about others
- Whinge about life and the way things are
- Complain about 'poor me'
- Blame others for their own unhappiness

(Lawrence, 2006)

Everyone has moments when they do one or more of these things, but a person with good self-esteem has a positive self-image and self-respect.

People with good self-esteem are more likely to:

- Recognise their own talents, achievements and worth
- Take responsibility for their ups and downs
- Don't blame others for what happens to them
- Feel ok about handling new situations
- Focus on improving themselves
- See mistakes and failures as learning experiences
- Don't worry too much about what other people think of them
- Are less likely to condemn or criticize others
- Look to others for inspiration (instead of comparing themselves with them)
- Avoid gossiping about others
- Recognise that they sometimes feel fearful but go for it anyway

(Lawrence, 2006)

Maintaining and improving your self-esteem can be difficult. The Counseling & Mental Health Center at The University of Texas, Austin (2002) recommend the following three steps toward better Self- esteem:

### Step 1: Rebut the Inner Critic

The first important step in improving self-esteem is to begin to challenge the negative messages of the critical inner voice. Here are some typical examples of the inner critic's voice and how you can "rebut" that voice.

<b><i>The Inner Critic's Voice:</i></b>	<b>Your Rebuttals:</b>
<b>Is Unfairly Harsh:</b> "People said they liked my presentation, but it was nowhere near as good as it should have been. I can't believe no-one noticed all the places I messed up. I'm such an impostor."	<b>Be Reassuring:</b> "Wow, they really liked it! Maybe it wasn't perfect, but I worked hard on that presentation and did a good job. I'm proud of myself. This was a great success."
<b>Generalizes Unrealistically:</b> "I got an F on the test. I don't understand anything in this class. I'm such an idiot. Who am I fooling? I shouldn't be taking this class. I'm stupid and I don't belong in college."	<b>Be Specific:</b> "I did poorly on this one test, but I've done O.K. on all the homework. There are some things here that I don't understand as well as I thought I did, but I can do the material-I've done fine in other classes that were just as tough."
<b>Makes Leaps of Illogic:</b> "He is frowning. He didn't say anything, but I know it means that he doesn't like me!"	<b>Challenge Illogic:</b> "O.K., he's frowning, but I don't know why. It could have nothing to do with me. Maybe I should ask."
<b>Catastrophizes:</b> "She turned me down for a date! I'm so embarrassed and humiliated. No one likes or cares about me. I'll never find a girlfriend. I'll always be alone."	<b>Be Objective:</b> "Ouch! That hurt. Well, she doesn't want to go out with me. That doesn't mean no one does. I know I'm an attractive and nice person. I'll find someone."

## **Step 2: Practice Self-Nurturing**

Rebutting your critical inner voice is an important first step, but it is not enough. Since our self-esteem is in part due to how others have treated us in the past, the second step to more healthy self-esteem is to begin to treat yourself as a worthwhile person.

Start to challenge past negative experiences or messages by nurturing and caring for yourself in ways that show that you are valuable, competent, deserving and lovable. There are several components to self-nurturing:

### **Practice Basic Self-Care**

Get enough sleep, eat in a healthy fashion, get regular exercise, practice good hygiene, and so forth.

### **Plan Fun & Relaxing Things for Yourself**

You could go to a movie, take a nap, get a massage, plant a garden, buy a pet, learn to meditate-whatever you enjoy.

### **Reward Yourself for Your Accomplishments**

You could take the night off to celebrate good grades, spend time with a friend, or compliment yourself for making that hard phone call.

### **Remind Yourself of Your Strengths & Achievements**

One way is to make a list of things you like about yourself. Or keep a 'success' file of awards, certificates and positive letters or citations. Keep momentos of accomplishments you are proud of where you can see them.

### **Forgive Yourself When You Don't Do All You'd Hoped**

Self-nurturing can be surprisingly hard if you are not used to doing it. Don't be critical of yourself (remember that inner voice!) when you don't do it just right.

### **Self-Nurture Even When You Don't Feel You Deserve It**

"Fake it" until you can "make it." When you treat yourself like you deserve to feel good and be nurtured, slowly you'll come to believe it.

### Step 3: Get Help From Others

Getting help from others is often the most important step a person can take to improve his or her self-esteem, but it can also be the most difficult. People with low self-esteem often don't ask for help because they feel they don't deserve it. But since low self-esteem is often caused by how other people treated you in the past, you may need the help of other people in the present to challenge the critical messages that come from negative past experiences.

Here are some ways to get help from others:

#### Ask for Support from Friends

- Ask friends to tell you what they like about you or think you do well.
- Ask someone who cares about you to just listen to you "vent" for a little while without trying to "fix" things.
- Ask for a hug.
- Ask someone who loves you to remind you that they do.

Now you need to make your plan! Using the three steps listed above, write out what you will do to maintain or develop your self-esteem.

Here are some helpful hints:

- *Write down any negative thoughts you are having about yourself and rebut them.*
- *Be specific as vague statements don't mean a lot when you are planning to nurture yourself. For example: people involved, times of the day, rewards for certain activities.*

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# Focusing On the Job

'Focusing on the Job' starts to prepare you to make the first step to finding your new career.

To do this you will be:

1. Identifying your current skills, qualities and attitudes
2. Goal setting to develop skills
3. Developing your confidence in self-promotion
4. Outlining your preferred work environments

## Skills, Qualities And Attitudes

*Firstly, the list below is broken into three categories – skills, qualities and attitudes. Look at the list and check that you understand what each one is.*

1. *Highlight or tick the ones you already have.*
2. *Put a cross beside any that definitely aren't important or relevant to your area of work.*

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Qualities</b>	<b>Attitude</b>
Able to prioritise	Ambitious	Caring
Book keeping	Bright personality	Easy to get on with
Brick laying	Compassionate	Enjoys work
Carpentry	Considerate creative	Enthusiastic
Communication skills- oral and listening	Efficient	Friendly
Communication skills – written	Fair	Helpful
Chair person	Generous	Industrious
Computer-keyboard	Get on well with others	Loving
Cross cultural	Gets the job done	Motivated positive
	Good team player	Passionate
	Honest	Responsible

understanding and awareness	Kind leadership	Safety conscious
Database	Loyal	Respectful
Driving	Organised	
English language	Pays attention to detail	
Excel – spreadsheet	People person	
Filing	Productive	
Fencing	Reliable	
Good with people	Responsible	
Grammar and spelling	Sense of humor	
Graphic design	Thoughtful	
Microsoft word	Well groomed	
Minute taking	Well spoken	
Networking		
Office management		
Operate equipment and machinery		
Plumbing		
Public speaking		
Receptionist		
Sales		
Shearing/crutching		
Supervising staff		

1. Make a list of all the skills an employer will want in any job you go for (the ads in the paper will help with this).

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2. Make a list of skills that you do not currently have, but would like to develop in the near future.

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3. For each skill you would like to develop, list one or two ways you could learn or practice those skills and the name of anyone who could assist you with this.

Eg. Computer skills

- Do a course or get a 'teach yourself typing' program
- Practice at the library or community center

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## The 2 Minute Role Play

*The 2 minute role play can help you in two ways:*

- 1. Develop your confidence when you are talking about your skills and abilities.*
- 2. Start to improve your interviewing skills.*

*Ask a family member or a friend to be the interviewer in this role play.*

### Scenario

The interview has just started. The opening question by the interviewer is "Tell me about yourself." Try to talk about yourself for 2 minutes. You should try to include the following topics:

- Career goals and interests
- Your accomplishments and qualifications
- Your work values
- Your recent work experience

*You can discuss these topics in any order, but try to include something about all 4 points. When you are finished, ask your interviewer the following questions.*

Q1. Was my story interesting?

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Q2. Was it convincing?

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Q3. Was anything left out?

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Q4. How could I make my response better?

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Have a think about the feedback you received. Make a list of how you will improve your 2 minute role play and try this activity at another time.

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**Your Work Environment:**

*The final activity of this section focuses on outlining the best possible work environment for you. When it comes to applying for jobs, you may not be able to have all your requirements fulfilled, but if you don't identify your preferences you won't know where to begin.*

*Use the following three categories to identify which work environment is best for you:*

- 1. The physical environment – office, outdoors, location, parking, public transport*
- 2. People associations – Work in a team, work alone, what type of people do you work best with*
- 3. Working hours- shift work, regular 9 -5, weekend work etc*

What is your ideal working environment?

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What working environment would you refuse to accept?

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# Your New Beginning

Congratulations on completing your self reflection and goal setting activities. This is quite an achievement! Let's recap on what you have achieved:

You have:

- Actively acknowledged how losing your job affected you.
- Established goals to achieve a balanced and healthy lifestyle.
- Reviewed your values and explored what needs your personality type requires.
- Set specific goals to ensure you care for yourself and maintain a healthy self-esteem.
- Identified your skills, qualities and attitudes while also making plans to develop these further.
- Established what type of working environment appeals to you.

And most importantly you have committed yourself to working through the neutral zone of your transition. It is now time for you to take what you have learnt about yourself and apply it to your next step – finding your job! Good luck, we hope the time and effort you have spent on your activities will benefit your choice in a new and fulfilling career.

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