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What To Do If Your Spouse Becomes Unemployed

Use these 3 tips to help you or your spouse keep their composure if they become unemployed

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Being unemployed can be a scary proposition, but it doesn't have to be the end of the road for your success

There you are, newly hitched and thrilled about it. This is a time when your two-income family abruptly becomes a stable one-income family. "Downsizing" sounds like one of those fancy made-up-kind-of-words until it happens to you. Then you realize the awful certainty of what it really means—fired. And you soon find out that getting a new job just isn't that easy.

Companies don't want to hire you at the pay scale you were accustomed to, but would rather go with that fresh-faced 22-year-old (which you were not so very long ago) and suddenly life gets very scary. Your security seems precarious and the lifestyle you've just started to establish with the love of your life looks like it's going down the drain. If life in the 21st century is full of marvels and "better living through technology," it's also full of constant change and chaos.

The likelihood of losing your job or your company—even your particular type of work going out of existence—are great. The skills you learned are likely to become outdated way before you're ready for it, and the number of people vying for your job is likely to go up, not down. Needing to change jobs or find new sources of income at various times are increasingly just a fact of life. Today it was you, tomorrow it could be your spouse. How do you prosper in the face of such a potentially anxiety-inducing dilemma? Short of tightening the belt unbearably or moving to the wilds hoping to live off the land, here are three steps you can take to help you prepare yourself in the event of a job loss.

1. Mine for the Gold

The gold is your inner gold, those personal qualities that lie beneath the skills you have learned or the trade you practice. Personal qualities are the self-discipline you've acquired, the creativity you've brought to the surface and the focus and concentration you've developed over the years. Those qualities are the ability to listen, the patience, the perseverance, the persistence that have evolved as you have met the various challenges of your life.

These qualities are the gold that underlies your more obvious skills and the "what I know how to do." These are the

qualities that help you become aware of and help you when you or your spouse need to go in new directions.

2. Discover Your Talents

Look for your deeper talents, the general talents that support your specific abilities. For example, you have a talent, which is communicating with others. This meant in your former job you were a good manager. You can apply that talent for communication to many areas, not just managing. If management options are limited, figure out other ways, other jobs, in which you can use your talent as a communicator.

Think of your talent as your strength—your main support—just as the trunk of a tree is its main support and the various jobs which could come out of that talent as the branches of a tree.

3. Be Flexible

Research shows those who survive downsizing and go on to greater success do so because they are willing to be flexible. People who said things like, "I'm a middle manager, I've always been a middle manager, so I have to find new work as a middle manager," were least likely to succeed. Those who were willing to say, "I've always been a middle manager and I'd like to find new work as a middle manager, but I'm open to doing something quite different" were most likely to succeed.

Expanding your options is bound to lead to greater opportunities for success. Remaining flexible is much easier when you are basing that flexibility on your underlying qualities and talents. You are not starting from scratch (which can be really terrifying), but rather are looking for yet another way to express those very unique qualities and talents which are profoundly yours.

Chaos and change are not about to leave our lives. The ability to respond to an ever-evolving workplace in ways that increase your chances of success and happiness are what will insure not only your personal survival, but the secure economic underpinnings of your marriage as well.

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