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# CAREERS

## *Losing your job: the grieving process* By Sara Tusek

It might seem odd that losing a job almost always causes grief. Even if you don't like your job, and choose to leave it, the natural reaction is to grieve for it.

It seems especially odd to grieve over a lost job since it's your attachments to God, your family, your friends and your community that typically provide emotional stability, not your job. Colleagues at work might become friends over time, but typically, most Americans keep their personal lives and their work lives apart.

### **WORK: YOUR TIME, ENERGY, & IDENTITY**

But when you consider what you give to and receive from your job, it begins to make sense that losing it (whether you resigned by choice or were forced to resign) will cause a strong experience of loss, which in turn causes grief.

If you work in a full-time professional capacity, your job takes most of your waking time, energy and creativity. Most professionals work a 60-80 hour week; add to that a 30-to-45 minute commute, and some time at home to ponder work-related issues or do paperwork or phone calls, and it's clear that work is the major focus of your time and energy.

Work provides you with an identity. You may be a parent, a spouse, a sibling or a friend, but most of the time, because of your job, you're a psychologist, a pediatrician, a marketing executive, teacher, a CEO or a journalist. When you meet someone at a social event, the conversation often starts with your job. If you don't make a conscious effort otherwise, your job can be perceived as your main identity.

### **THE JOB TAKES; THE JOB GIVES**

Most people who have a job think of it as something that takes from them. The job takes your time, your energy, your creativity, your patience, your intellect and your talents.

What you might not think about is what your job gives you: a framework for your allotting of time (a schedule), much of your satisfaction in accomplishment, a group of colleagues with whom you can share ideas and problems, health insurance, and—oh, yes—a salary.

*Photo courtesy Adriena Stegmullerova*



While you have a job, you can freely complain about it (at least to trusted friends). You can imagine how your job would be better if you could do less of this and more of that, or if your boss were different, or if you had a nicer workspace.

Then you lose your job. Things change; what seemed difficult in your job now seems like a trivial obstacle. Even if you hated your job, you can't help feeling nostalgic about it, especially if you don't have a new job yet.

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## THE EMOTIONS OF GRIEF

Many excellent psychology books can give you a thorough explanation of the grieving process. However, to put it briefly, grief has these emotional faces:

- Shock and disbelief
- Humiliation
- Anger
- Depression
- Bargaining
- Acceptance and ability to move on

### Shock & disbelief

The shock of losing your job, even if you resigned of your own free will, begins the first day you don't go to work. You may feel elated and carefree, but you also have a hint of disquiet, imagining endless days of non-work stretching ahead of you.

### Humiliation

If you lose your job through a fur-

lough, lay-off, termination or non-renewal of contract, you may feel embarrassed to tell anyone. It's humiliating to be let go, even due to circumstances beyond your control.

### Anger

Anger over perceived or actual unfairness in the process of losing your job is another common emotion. This is when people send letters and emails they may later regret!

### Depression

Depression may be felt, especially if no new job is available, or the new job is seen as a downward step. Even a great new job is not always enough to forestall this normal feeling of depression associated with grief.

### Bargaining

Bargaining may follow depression; you promise God to do something (or not do something) if you can only get

your old job back. You try to make a deal that will undo what's been done.

### FINALLY AT REST

You may cycle through these emotions in any order, and come back to an emotion you thought you'd worked through, finding that you still have negative feelings about your job or the circumstances of losing your job.

Don't worry about it. These are normal reactions to loss. Once you accept that losing your job is a significant loss, personally, financially and professionally, it's easier to accept the emotions that accompany loss.

At some point the grief will cease; a new job or simply coming to terms with your loss will bring peace. Everyone loses something in life; maybe it's not so bad if the biggest loss you've had so far is to lose your job.

**As millions of Americans are losing their jobs, here is our answer to this uncertain economic environment**

**Careers**  
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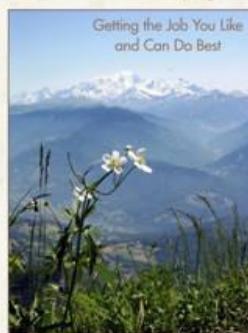
### Careers is back!

We started publishing this newsletter in 1985, at St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY. In 1987 it migrated south to The University of the South in Sewanee, TN, where we published it till 1993.

After giving it a 16-year rest, we're reviving *Careers*, in response to the needs of people to find a career in today's challenging job market.

**We want to help you find the job you like and can do best!**

## 21st Century Jobs



By Sara D. & Jaroslav B. Tusek

## 21st Century Jobs Seminar

The "21st Century Jobs Seminar" gives you access to the practical advice of Institute President Jarda Tusek, who has more than 27 years of experience in helping people get jobs that correctly match their skills, abilities, interests and goals with the right business or organization.

**This seminar uses our newest book, 21st Century Jobs, as its workbook.**

We aim to help you, the job seeker or career changer, to identify your unique set of gifts, talents, skills, interests, accomplishments, values and dreams--and then to find ways to make those dreams into reality, bringing all of your potential to the job which will use this potential to the fullest: **the job that you can love, and do best.**

*The next "21st Century Jobs" seminar begins in August, in Lake Mary, Florida. Please email Jarda at [jbt@ili.cc](mailto:jbt@ili.cc) for more details.*