

## ASK THE EXPERTS

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### HEALTH AND WELLNESS

#### *My emotions are bouncing all over the place since I lost my job, is that normal?*

What you are experiencing is completely normal. It was even documented by Richard S. Deems, PhD, Terri A. Deems, PhD, and Sandra Brownfield Deems, MKC in The Deems Job Loss Reaction Cycle™. Consider it your roadmap for the path forward after job loss.

Life's most profound insights often emerge from our most challenging experiences, as Richard Deems discovered when his professional focus shifted from end-of-life care to the emotional journey of career transitions.

Through his transformative work coaching individuals facing terminal illness or coping with the loss of loved ones, Richard gained profound insights into the grief reactions documented by psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. However, when experiencing his own career transition, he discovered an opportunity to develop a new understanding of job loss.

Inspired by this personal journey, Richard dedicated himself to extensive research on career transitions, ultimately uncovering a valuable six-stage process that illuminates the path forward after losing a job. While everyone navigates through these stages, each person's journey unfolds at their own pace. Richard's work provides a roadmap for resilience and renewal in the face of professional change.

The arrows in the Cycle go up and down and back and forth because you won't go through the stages in a neat, sequential way. Everyone experiences job loss differently, and you will encounter the stages differently from day to day – until you reach the final stage of Acceptance and Affirmation.



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### **HERE ARE THE PHASES PEOPLE GO THROUGH WHEN LOSING THEIR JOB:**

**Shock and/or Disbelief.** Even if you suspect it is coming, hearing “Your job is being eliminated” is still a cause of shock and disbelief. It can feel like being in a bad dream. You may stop hearing what is being said beyond the initial announcement.

**Anger and/or Resentment.** Shock turns very quickly into anger that this has happened. Anger can continue as Resentment. As you discuss these feelings with others, be careful not to degrade the company or people in the organization. Turn that anger and resentment into action.

**Denial and/or Bargaining.** Do not waste time and energy thinking the employer will call you back. Most terminations are permanent.

**Self-Doubt and/or Put-Downs.** Even if the economy is uncertain, or your organization is being reorganized, you may start feeling this was your fault. “If I really was good at my job, they’d have found a way to keep me.” You may undervalue what you contributed in the past and what you can contribute in the future. You may think that you have let your family down or wonder if you can ever do anything right again.

**Withdrawal and/or Depression.** This phase can be devastating. It’s very easy to sleep late, to surf the internet, and to not use time wisely. The longer it goes on, the more a person withdraws and doesn’t reach out to others. Depression can set in.

**Acceptance and Affirmation.** This stage may take many months for some. It includes Acceptance that you went through a major job change and Affirmation that you have much to contribute. This is the time to stop and evaluate your strengths, values, and what you really want from a position so that you can identify your ideal job.

### **FEAR, FRUSTRATION, AND PHYSICAL EFFECTS**

People go through the Job Loss Reaction Cycle experiencing a sense of fear, frustration, and physical effects:

**Fear** that it will take a long time to find another job. Fear that bills won’t get paid. Fear that friends and family may lose respect for you.

The **Frustration** of not knowing exactly how long it will take to find a new position, which may in turn cause a lack of connection with others or a lack of routine. **The job market is constantly changing. What worked for you last time likely won’t today.** If you are offered outplacement services through your employer, take it. If not, consider hiring a career coach and/or joining a support group.

**Physical effects** resulting from the tremendous stress caused by job loss. Because stress can impact your resistance to fighting infection, you may have more colds, headaches, and flu. Incorporate physical activity and healthy eating into your daily routine.

While all of these stages and effects are normal, long-term issues with daily functioning -- including sleep, appetite, and concentration -- are not. Consider obtaining additional support from a behavioral health professional.

Richard's unique perspective offers invaluable wisdom for anyone facing career disruption. His six-stage model not only validates the complex emotions of job loss, but also transforms them into stepping stones toward renewal. Understanding this emotional roadmap empowers those experiencing job loss to be gentler with themselves during difficult phases and more strategic in their approach to finding new opportunities. With the right support and self-awareness, this challenging transition can ultimately lead to professional growth, renewed confidence, and often, a more fulfilling career path aligned with one's true values and strengths.

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