

Bounce Back From a Job Loss

There's more to you than a title! Use this time to redefine yourself—and gain confidence in the process—with these four simple strategies.

BY SUZANNE WEINSTOCK

➔ Why is it that when you meet someone new, the first question you ask each other is, “So what do you do?” It’s an easy way to make small talk, but the answer can actually be pretty revealing. “The type of job you have is supposed to tell us about who you are and what you might value,” says Michael Steger, Ph.D., psychology professor at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. But when you can no longer say, “I manage budgets,” or “I teach fifth grade,” it’s not just your livelihood that’s at stake—your sense of self may be threatened as well. So whether you’ve been downsized or are taking a work hiatus (say, to raise your family), these tips can help you rediscover your best self.

1/REMEMBER YOUR KEY STRENGTHS

● “Your identity is about you, not your employer,” says Nancy

To stay motivated, dress up and get out of the house.

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Stay in touch! Sixty percent of all jobs are found through networking.

Collamer, a career coach in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. In order to move forward, divorce yourself from your last job title, and think about all the ways you brought value to the various companies you've worked for. Don't forget to include activities that weren't necessarily central to your job description, but that you enjoyed, such as mentoring.

2/BE SOCIAL

- Think about your personality traits, and you might list qualities such as helpful, generous, and funny. If you're suddenly spending a lot of time alone, it's no wonder you don't feel like you—it's hard to be funny or generous while staring at the computer, says Steger. The solution is a no-brainer: Be around other people. Hang out with supportive friends and family members and attend events relevant to your profession, whether that means trade organization

meetings or networking sessions with former colleagues. "It's important to be active in whatever community you're in. Even if you're not employed at the moment, you're still part of the tribe," says Collamer.

3/REFRAME YOUR PURPOSE

- Everyone's life needs to have some point, whether it's providing for a family or making the world a better place. "But when our day-to-day doesn't include built-in deadlines and goals, we often feel a lack of direction," says Steger. Fortunately you can still work toward what's important to you. For instance, "paying the bills is only part of what it takes to build a strong and loving family," says Steger. "Becoming more involved in your child's school or making healthy meals contributes just as much."

4/PURSUE YOUR PASSIONS

- "What you do for the love of it says even more about who you are than what you do for money," says Joe Robinson, author of *Don't Miss Your Life*. "A hobby is more about the experience, whereas a job is more about the results." Coming up with an answer to "What do I like to do?" isn't always easy. Collamer suggests thinking about your childhood—perhaps you lived for dance or soccer. "What excited you as a kid may bring you joy now."

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