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# LAI D OFF, Now What?!?

Surviving Unemployment, 2009 Recession Edition

The Layoff Lady 

LAI D OFF Now What?!? *"The best, most practical resource available!"*

Releasing October 2009 BY LAURA D LEWIS

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Couples Company.com Fri, September 04, 2009

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## 7 PROACTIVE STEPS THAT COUNTER NEGATIVE SELF-ESTEEM AFTER A JOB LOSS

By [Laura Dawn Lewis](#)  
*Excerpt from Laid Off Now What 2009*

If you've been unemployed for more than a couple of months, you're probably beginning to have doubts. Especially during this recession, when jobs are five times more difficult to get and many in your network are currently out of work. You send out ten to twelve resumes a day and hear nothing. You start to wonder if all your efforts are being swallowed into some type of resume black hole. If maybe there is something wrong with you. If perhaps you'll never find a job or get an interview.

These self-doubts are normal and every single person looking for a job has them. It's tough out there. That's a fact. There are lots of reasons to have doubts but a single reason not to. You've got value. You're good at what you do and any company will be lucky to get you. They just don't know that yet and the only person who can tell them, is you. That's where tools like webfolios, testimonial letters, useful submissions to various online social media networks and blogging come in. These tools all show the world what you can do. More importantly, they give you a purpose and something to do that's proactive which ultimately elevates your self-esteem while keeping your focus on work and sharpening your skills.

This article is about keeping your mental attitude focused and positive so you can attract the right opportunities. Nothing kills opportunity faster than a victim mentality coupled with a negative attitude shrouded in overwhelming apathy.

### WAYLON JENNINGS & THE SECRET TO SUCCESS

Waylon Jennings, one of the top country music singers of all time had a similar problem when he was trying to break into the music business. He knew he was good and he knew he wanted to be a singer. His problem, none of the agents or producers seemed to see that. He was practically starving, sharing a flat with other soon-to-be mega stars, dodging landlords and scraping to keep the necessities turned on. So what changed?

Jennings could have continued to be just another aspiring artist who never made it big, but he wasn't. When asked in an interview well after he'd made it, "What is the secret to your success?", the singer had a very simple answer,

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"Make them notice you."

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Make them notice you. The singer stopped focusing on tactics that caused him to be just one of many (sending in tapes, visiting production studio after production studio etc...) and sought out opportunities, paying or not, that put his name and his work out there. He found out where those he needed to advance his career hung out and took every opportunity in their presence to demonstrate his talent without seeming desperate. With a can-do attitude and refusal to bow to convention, his karma, for lack of a better word, attracted success to him. In time, he created a buzz and the right people did notice him. With his success, he brought along those who helped him along the way. The rest is history.

How do you do that? Jennings was a performer. You're not, or are you? By actively seeking opportunities that showcase your talent to the community you perform before the decision-makers and peers who may be the source of your next opportunity. If you're a construction worker, start volunteering time with non-profits like Habitat for Humanity or speak to your local government officials to see if your talents may be useful in some of the poor neighborhoods. If you're an executive or salesperson, start a blog teaching tips and techniques that have enabled you to succeed. If you're a financial analyst, create a newsletter that help teens learn how to invest and handle finances. The point is, you have talent if you have a job. Find avenues that allow you to use that talent to help others and people will start to notice you. Not only will this keep your skills sharp and mind occupied, it will provide you with a sense of accomplishment that translates to a positive self-esteem and outlook. That outlook is contagious. People like to work with winners and that attitude says you're one. Cultivate it. Make them notice you.

#### **WHAT IF...STAYING FOCUSED & KEEPING POSITIVE**

Did you know that negative thoughts effect you physically? Here's proof. Stand with your arms spread out like a cross. Think of something positive like "I am the best at what I do. I am invincible!". Ask someone to try to push your arm down while you're thinking this and make an effort to prevent it. This should be difficult for them.

Now stand again with your arms out and start thinking negative things about yourself. "I'll never get a job. My wife hates me." Ask this person to push your arm down again. If you're focusing on negative thoughts, they should be able to push it down with little or no effort, even while you try to prevent it. Your mind is very powerful and it is one of the few things in your life you really have control over.

The first time I saw this done in a lecture in college, I didn't believe it. Then I tried it. I was amazed and it taught me a very valuable lesson. The power of positive thinking. How is it, a peasant in the streets of Calcutta with no material possessions can be filled with a joy for life and be content, while someone born of privilege with every advantage in the world will take their own life? The man in Calcutta appreciates what he has now and doesn't dwell on what he doesn't have. He chooses to be happy, no matter what. If your unemployed and frightened about what might happen, what if...this is a crucial tool to surviving and thriving. Make a vow to yourself right now. Say, "No matter what happens, I am happy and will stay happy. I will not let forces outside of myself control me or determine who I am."

#### **BECOME THE MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN**

Seinfeld aside, there is only one thing in this world that you can completely control and that is you. You are the master of your personal domain. You cannot control other people and they cannot hurt you mentally unless you choose to allow them to do this. You cannot control places, if you could you'd control earthquakes, the weather and the effect others have on those places. Finally, you cannot control things or events. You can anticipate them, plan for them and affect them, but you'll never control them.

Your thoughts, your actions, your beliefs, these are the only things you are accountable for and the only things that you can completely control or change. It's your choice and the power belongs only to you. You can choose to be happy, hopeful and confident or you can choose to wallow in fear, worry and regret. So which will it be? Which will help you get to the end of this challenge faster? How will you master your domain?

#### **FOCUS ON TODAY**

This very simple trick has saved my sanity and given me the ability to go on, regardless of my fears.

It works like this .

*Ask yourself:*

- *Do I have a roof over my head today?*
- *Do I have food in the cupboard today?*
- *Is my electricity still on today?*
- *Is my car still parked in the drive?*

If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, take a deep breath. Relax. Today you are okay. You can't worry about what will happen tomorrow. You could win the lottery or you could be dead. It's an unknown and outside of your control at this moment. It's in the future and you'll deal with that when it occurs. But today, you are okay. Chances are tomorrow you will be okay. If you are worried about what might happen in two weeks or two months, you're wasting energy on supposition.

Every time you begin to future trip, start asking yourself 'Today' questions. Entrepreneurs do this a lot. At times, when you don't know where the money is going to come from, today questions will help you appreciate what you

have, calm you and prevent you from freaking out about things that in most cases, will never happen. And if they do, you'll survive.

### **DEFINE YOUR FEARS**

They say money is the root of all evil. Few would disagree given money denotes greed and greed makes men do things that are not in his or her and society's best interest. However, fear is a close runner up and often this fear is disguised as hate when directed at others, or as self-doubt when directed within.

Why do we hate? We hate what we do not know, what we fear. Fear stems from two catalysts. Natural fear is a survival tool. It keeps you from walking into dark alleys where you may be attacked or from engaging in activities that can harm or kill you. This type of fear is healthy and transitory. It shows up when it's needed and disappears once the threat is gone.

The second type of fear rests on the unknown, basically ignorance. Fear grounded in ignorance is a tool of manipulation whether intentional or not. Ignorant fear is how politicians coax nations into war, convince you to relinquish your freedom or distrust others by circumstance. Advertisers and marketers use it effectively to convince you to purchase their products and services. This fear produces stress, anxiety and can paralyze you. Fortunately, it's also easily dismissed, though most people never take the necessary step of freeing themselves from this fear: asking questions.

The key to eradicating the second type of fear is educating yourself and challenging the accepted wisdom on any issue or circumstance that is causing you anxiety, doubt, fear or anger (hate) toward another or situation. The first step to eliminating these fears is defining what they are.

The following is old salesperson's trick that helps overcome fears about cold calling and negotiations. It works even better in personal situations. It goes like this. Begin asking yourself:

What are you afraid of? Make a list of your fears. Is it losing your home? Losing your credit rating? Losing your family's respect? Not finding a job? Write them down. Once you've identified your fears, (this exercise may take you several days), define those fears. Defining your fears means playing out the worst case scenario. In truth, it is the experience or possibility that you are actually afraid of.

#### ***What is the worst case scenario?***

Let's take "Can't pay your bills". Worst case scenario: bankruptcy, repo, loss of services, homelessness.

#### ***Now, diffuse your fears by realistically looking at possible outcomes***

Granted, this will make life a little uncomfortable for a couple years, but it's not the end of the world. The way the credit industry is set up, you basically pay the same penalty for a two 30 or 60 day late payments as you do for a bankruptcy. The worst thing that will happen, you won't be able to get a credit card or line of credit for a year or two unless it's secured. And all those things you need credit cards for? With check cards, you don't need one anymore.

If you have some credit problems or bankruptcy and you'll have to pay a higher interest on your next car, sure. Maybe you should just live with the cars you have for the next several years. You'll still be able to get a home, student loans, a job (people understand credit problems due to unemployment), health care and a multitude of other things; you'll just have to pay a higher interest rate or deposit. Thousands of people declare bankruptcy every year and many will tell you it's the best action they every took. Thousands lose their cars to repo men. There is public transportation and in most cases you can get a decent basic used car for around \$1,000. Yes, it's not fun. But given the worst case scenario, is it really that scary?

Credit problems do not make you a bad person or a bad financial risk; they just make life a little more interesting for a couple years and you a little wiser about how you spend. Just remember, credit problems will not kill you. They are not life-threatening. Be honest; the fallout from credit issues is simply uncomfortable.

Losing your home is scary. If you're a renter, you're vulnerable. At least as a homeowner you can generally stay in the home until it is foreclosed on and auctions, giving you another one to three years. Renters typically have thirty-days or less and they're on the street.

This is the one place where you need to play the "What if" game in order to have a contingency plan. It will give you peace of mind and enable you to focus on the present rather than worrying.

If you have a family, no doubt you've made arrangements for your children's care should you and your spouse die. Do the same now in the event you lose your home. Are there relatives or friends your children can stay with temporarily until you get back on your feet if this happens? Are you and your spouse in agreement about what to do if this should happen? These are issues that need to be discussed in the beginning when you first lose your job and are thinking clearly, not when the panic sets in and you are desperate.

Do the research and you'll find you have many options. Knowledge is power. Get the knowledge and take back your power. When you take back your power and have a plan, the fear disappears. By being proactive and having a plan, you also drastically reduce the possibility that your fears become self-fulfilling prophecy.

### **USE THIS TIME TO GROW**

The best way to keep your spirits up when unemployed is to engage your mind in something that interests or

challenges you. Being home, you'll become very familiar with daytime TV and all the bladder control problems people must have, at least based upon the commercials. Within a week, you'll probably be bored stiff. Now is the time to do all those things you said you'd do one day if you ever had the time. Guess what? You now have the time. Here are some suggestions that just might uncover a talent you didn't know you had.

#### **Write a book for your children**

It doesn't matter what age they are and it can be fiction or non-fiction. Do you have a teenager you'd love to tell about your experiences at his/her age, but never seem to find the time? [Write a book](#) about it and give it to him or her for his/her birthday. What about your husband? Take a crack at writing an erotic short story and surprise him one night.

#### **Learn a new skill**

Become autodidactic (self-taught). Teach yourself a new computer program, how to draw, play the guitar, arrange flowers or make jewelry. Learn how to cook Indian food or another cuisine. What about photography? Write a business plan, research a new product. Now's the time to learn and you just might discover a new career.

#### **Start a health and fitness program**

How many times have you used the excuse you didn't have enough time to exercise? You have the time.

#### **Volunteer at your local school or shelter**

This is your opportunity to give to those less fortunate or help children help themselves (and make 'them' notice you). Pick a cause you're interested in and volunteer some time. Be careful if you're receiving unemployment and volunteering. The state considers this "work" and will disqualify you in most cases.

#### **Study your religion**

Be honest. How many Christians have read the entire Bible? And those of you in the Jewish faith? What about the Torah and Talmud? It's funny, most of us call ourselves Christian, Jewish or Muslim and few of us have read and studied the entire works, which represent our beliefs or those of our sister faiths. If we have, it was in our youth, several decades ago. If you can't remember calculus after 20 years, do you really remember what John. 3:16 means? If you're Christian and you can't answer this, you might want to hit the Bible again beginning with the New Testament. This passage is the foundation of our faith and the New Testament covers what Christianity is all about.

Maybe you can quote chapter and verse for your faith. How well do you understand the other two faiths that share the same God, or some of the polytheistic faiths worldwide? So much fear and hatred toward others is based upon ignorance today of the key motivations that define entire people and faiths. Islam is the latest whipping post. In the past Buddhism, Hindu, Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Mormonism and a whole host of others have been the feared and hated faith. No faith is immune.

Taking the time to understand what motivates others, why they believe what they do and what their religious books actually say, (rather than the propaganda cited or used to instill fear and distrust by those with an agenda) will make you a stronger more compassionate person, better leader, motivator and employee. You can only gain by taking the time to study other faiths. You'll be surprised how much in common we really have.

### **SEEK OUT INSPIRATIONAL STORIES**

The best weapon you have against depression and a feeling of helplessness during this period is your brain. Keep your thoughts positive. Engage your mind in activity. Use this time to grow. Don't give up on yourself and don't let your fears rule your future.

Watch the movies recommended in our feature: [Top Inspirational Films of All Time](#). (We need to add Cinderella Man to this list along with We are Marshall).

On the other hand, if you have a tendency to feel sorry for yourself, you might want to watch some films about real tragedy. It's impossible to think you are in such horrible shape after seeing what real, life threatening trouble and pure unemployment looks like in a movie like *The Killing Fields*, *Schindler's List* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. It's also impossible to feel entitled to pity once you realize what other people must endure to simply survive. Documentaries including [In a Soldier's Footsteps](#) about child soldiers in Uganda; [Occupation 101](#) covering life for Christians and Muslims under the 60+ years of Israeli occupation; or [Daryl Hannah's human trafficking documentary](#), an undercover expose on human trafficking worldwide will open your eyes and stave off any self pity. They might even get you motivated to do something...another bonus!

####

Use the steps outlined in this article if you start to feel scared, unsure, nervous, useless or any other negative emotion while unemployed. You need your wits about you. Negativity keeps you chained in fear and performing below your potential. People seem to sense it, fear and despiration, so it's in your best interest to arrest both by any means possible.

The fact is, no matter how bad you think your life is right now, millions are living far worse. Your situation right now is temporary. This too shall pass and you will survive. Use this time to reinvent yourself, learn and try new things. Most importantly, keep busy and don't dwell on what if. Focus rather on where you want to be six months or a year from now and the steps you need to take to get there.

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