



A division of Presbyterian Healthcare Services

Helpful Advice for You and Your Teammates During a Layoff

Even if you've been "spared" during this latest challenging time, it's no fun seeing someone you care about thrown into emotional upheaval because they're worried about losing their job. It's even more distressing when it's someone you work with. Of course you want to help, but what do you say? You both know that your job is secure, so will your reassurances and sympathies just cause resentment?

Here's the short answer: If you care about this person, you must offer support even if it makes you uncomfortable. Staying silent or ignoring the elephant in the room will only make things worse for them.

Dealing with the News

Hearing that they may be let go is devastating and can leave employees in a state of shock. Keep your strategy simple while your coworker processes the news--reach out, make yourself available, and listen. That's it. Doing anything else during this time is counterproductive.

If job loss is a possibility rather than a certainty, add helping your coworker stay focused on their day-to-day job duties to your list. Distraction and undue worry turn possible outcomes into self-fulfilling prophecies.

Long-Term Care Strategies

After the initial shock of the news has passed, you'll have more ways to provide a helping hand. There are two ways to support your coworker—emotionally and practically. It is helpful to do both.

Emotional Support

Put things into perspective: It's hard to see the big picture when you're scared and angry. Your coworker will be both. Help them avoid obsessing over worse-case, doomsday scenarios.

Keep it real: Maintaining perspective does not mean putting a happy face on bad events. Impending job loss is no picnic. Acknowledge and respect your coworker's feelings.

Build self-esteem: Losing your job is a tremendous emotional blow. Relentlessly build up your coworker with positive affirmations and continuous reminders of her abilities and accomplishments.

Intervene to deter negativity: If they're experiencing anger and resentment, acknowledge the feeling, however don't feed into those feelings by being your coworker's venting buddy. Instead, steer conversations into positive territory. Shield your coworker from doom-and-gloom coworkers.

Communicate carefully: Never ask open questions such as, "How will you pay the mortgage?" Instead, gently probe areas of concern and offer to help: "Is your resume current? Would you like help with that? Would you like me to put you in touch with a good service? Are you aware of EAP support? Which is available for 6 months post-employment."

Tips for Support

Make an action plan: Get specific! Taking care of details is empowering. Help your coworker prepare a list of concerns and start problem-solving.

Help with budgeting: Encourage your coworker to start slashing expenses now, instead of waiting.

Use your network: Get the word out early that your coworker will be available for hire and start connecting her with professionals in your network.

Suggest retraining: Find out what your coworker's potential employers are looking for and help them uncover areas of weakness that they can improve upon before beginning their job search.

Help identify your coworker's unique strengths and talents. Everyone has them, but they're usually more easily spotted by outsiders. Clarifying core competencies makes it possible to expand job searches into new, sometimes surprising areas that offer better prospects.

Offer your time and/or expertise: Solve at least one problem for your coworker. Do they need support on how to use a job search site? What about help with child-care when they're interviewing for a new job? Find out where you can help and make a commitment to do so.

Call your EAP for group or individual support through these challenging times. 866-254-3555.

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