

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

You and Your Career: Managing Through Tough Times

Barbara A. Fuchs, MS BSN RN CCMEP CPHQ FNAHQ

Quality professionals have been directly and indirectly affected by the financial crisis. The financial crisis has caused organizations to close, merge, or reduce their current workforce. If your organization has not been affected yet, rumors are probably swirling around the organization, making it difficult to work in an environment where people are unsure, frightened, and insecure.

Managing these uncertain times is not easy. Many employees feel that they are their jobs, so when they lose their position, they may experience a loss of identity or self-worth and an inability to manage their personal lives. Employees who remain with their organizations feel a sense of loss, survivor's guilt, and insecurity that may affect their ability to manage day to day.

Keep in mind that both groups will go through the five stages of loss: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The length of time a person experiences each phase varies, but similar questions arise during progress through the stages: Why me? How could upper management do this to me? Why am I so angry at my colleagues—or at myself? What can I do to make things as they were? Why don't I have energy for career or personal life? Why do I want to retreat from my friends and family? Why am I sad all of the time? How do I create a new path for myself? What lessons have I learned about myself, my profession, my higher purpose?

No matter where you are on this continuum, you must remember and recognize that

- you are more than your title and position
- many good and talented people are losing their positions in this environment
- you have a right to feel how you feel
- it is not a sign of weakness to seek professional help
- some friends, including colleagues and acquaintances, will seem to be abandoning you at this time. It may be that they are simply too frightened and insecure about their own careers. True friends will reach out and do all they can to support you during this time.

If you are unemployed, about to be unemployed, or worried about being unemployed, follow the following steps:

1. Assess your financial situation calmly and without panic. Rein in spending and develop a budget. Consider all resources, including healthcare benefits and education assistance. How long can you and your family survive with your current savings or severance pay?
2. Carefully perform a self-assessment that includes your skills, talents, and desires. For many, the current circumstances present an opportunity to pursue a dream or life calling.
3. Activate your support system. Discuss certain topics with your family and other topics with a friend, mentor, or trusted colleague.
4. Although finding a new position is a full-time job, don't let it consume you. Make time for yourself and take periodic breaks to clear your head and restore your energy and sense of balance.
5. Thank those who assist or support you in any way.
6. If you feel secure in your current position, you should keep your résumé current, always look for new skills to develop, network consistently, and create a development plan and assess it on a quarterly basis.

One final thought: Believe in yourself, explore all of the possibilities, and celebrate your next success!

Barbara Fuchs is president of EPIQ Services, LLC, in Collegeville, PA. She can be reached at bfuchs.epiqsvc@comcast.net.