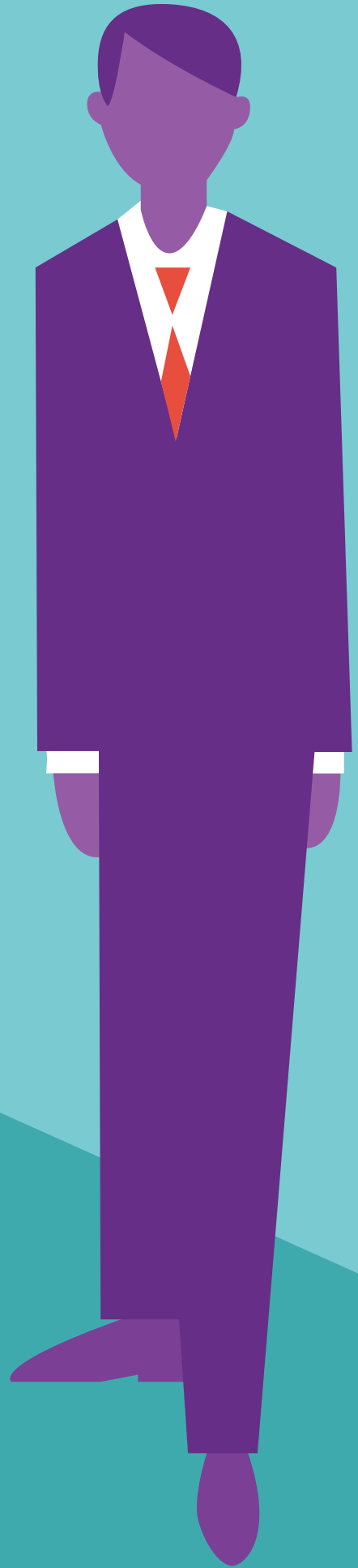


I JUST LOST
MY JOB,
**WHAT
NEXT?**



I just lost my job, what next?

This is no time for platitudes about seizing the day. Losing your job can be hard.

With high unemployment rates and an unstable economy, finding yourself out of work can be daunting to say the least, and trite advice about pursuing your dream can feel infuriating when you can't afford to procrastinate.

But there are rational ways of thinking and behaving that can help.

What to do

Ground yourself

Don't feel obliged to get on the job hunt straight away. Take a couple of days to gather your thoughts and acclimatise to your situation.

Get back to basics

Write down how you're going to pay next month's rent. Do you need to rearrange your childcare? What luxuries can you cut out to save your pennies?

Do your research

Do your research thoroughly. What are your options? Volunteering? Teaching abroad? Changing career?

Be an opportunist

Write down a list of all things you never have time to do when you're working. And do them.

Be brave

Make a decision about your next move. Then stick to it. In the future it may prove to have been the wrong one,

but flip-flopping and procrastinating at a time like this will increase your stress levels.

Maximise your resources

Use Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook. Use all the tools which will give you a professional web presence and get you noticed.

Be sociable

Don't be a recluse. Stay healthy by making time for your friends.

Relax...

Make sure you use your job-hunt time efficiently so that your leisure time isn't lost.

... But stay active

Exercise. Or at the very least get out of the house for an hour everyday.

Be realistic

Ambition's admirable, but don't let a perfectionistic drive for 'the dream job' cloud your perspective.

Ground yourself

This sounds obvious, but all too often the desire to be proactive in the face of job loss makes people rush into unwise decisions while they're still reeling. Take a couple of days to acclimatise. Curl up and watch movies if that feels right.

If you're becoming consumed with worry and your mind won't stop doom-mongering about a future of jobless misery, try going for a long walk, and using author Eckhart Tolle's technique of rooting yourself in the present. Ask yourself if you have any problems right now, and unless you're currently in physical pain the answer is probably 'no'.

This may seem like a patronising stance to adopt in the face of such a massive life upheaval. But the exercise demonstrates that while joblessness is not ideal, the only thing that's likely to cause you distress in the present moment is engaging with the worrisome narrative inside your head.

Get back to basics

Make sure the basics are taken care of. How are you going to pay next month's rent? Do you need to rearrange your childcare? What luxuries can you cut out to save your pennies?

Get all this written down for clarity's sake.

Do your research

You'll then need to start thinking about your next move. Are you going to up sticks and move to Thailand? Are you going to start your own business? Are you going to search for another similar job? Give yourself time to explore these avenues thoroughly. Maybe you're feeling lost and don't know what to do? Incorporate taste-testing into your research, because you'll never know if you don't dip your toe in the water.

Make use of tools such as idealists.org and do-it.org.uk, which will help you to discover something which suits you. Volunteering is not just a selfless good deed, it can gleam on your CV, and it's a great way to receive free training in a specialist area. Plus many organisations will pay your travel expenses, so you won't even find yourself out of pocket.

If you prefer work experience of the paid variety you could study for a TEFL qualification (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), which is a great way of earning an income while taking stock of your situation and seeing the world. A quick browse of tefl.com reveals positions available in locations as varied as Tunisia, Chile and China's ancient capital, Xi'an.

Doing a bit of research and scratching the surface can reveal a thousand ways for you to apply yourself without hopping straight back into the 9-5.

Be an opportunist

Turn unemployment on its head and make it work for you. Career breaks very seldom come around. Could this be yours? Is now the time to make the professional change that you've been dreaming about?

For many successful entrepreneurs, it took redundancy to give them the push they needed to take the plunge and do something they really loved. Check out careershifters.org for practical advice about how to change career.

Make a list of all the things that you never had a chance to do when you were employed. Think about those times you flopped down on the sofa after a twelve hour day. What would you have done if you'd had the energy? Maybe you'd have caught up on your blog; maybe you'd have organised that stack of old photos; maybe you'd have sent that long-awaited email to an old friend.

This might sound like the kind of thing your dad says to you when you're whining that you're bored on summer holidays, but having a project will help you stay away from asinine daytime television, and lend your day essential structure.

Be brave

Once you've considered your options, make a decision and stick to it. After a few days, weeks, or even years, it may prove to have been the wrong one, but flip-flopping at a time like this will exacerbate your stress levels. 'Procrastination is opportunity's natural assassin,' as American entrepreneur Victor Kiam said. You'll never know whether you'll sink or swim if you don't at least try.

Maximise your resources

If you've decided to search for work, the broadsheet jobs pages are still a good starting point. But we're a lazy bunch, and these days you can access a wealth of tools without even getting out of bed. We recommend you create a LinkedIn profile. Apart from getting access to jobs boards, it'll connect you to a vast community of people within your field. You'll have the chance to display your glittering CV to the rest of the world, and interact with others via discussion groups.

Join Twitter. It's an unlikely leg-up to professional advancement, but most recruitment agencies now post vacancies via their Twitter feeds. Simply sign up, log on, and type keywords into the top right search field. The search for 'graphic designer London' revealed 25 new vacancies posted in the last nine days. Have a presence, be around, make yourself known. If you follow the right people, Twitter can be an invaluable source of information.

Don't be shy to reach out to your social media contacts, either. Put a post out asking whether anyone can recommend any good job websites or agencies. Word of mouth and personal recommendations are still the most valuable climbing tool when it comes to your career, so take advantage of the vast network which is literally at your fingertips.

Be sociable

You can't really overestimate the importance of staying social at a time like this, especially if you're used to a bustling office environment. It might be the last thing you feel like doing when you're down in the dumps, but staving off your inner recluse will help you stay motivated and connected at a time when networking is crucial.

Unemployed.meet-up.com have groups in all major cities, where jobless wonders can meet up, exchange ideas and map out their next moves. If there's not a meet-up group in your area, the website can help you to start one of your own.

Relax...

Whatever you do, don't forget to relax. Job-seekers often feel guilty about unwinding because they feel pressured to be constantly striving to change their situation. But indulging in leisure will be one of your strongest strategies for remaining healthy during this stressful time.

Set aside a few hours each day to search for work – perhaps an hour each morning and an hour each evening – and stay focussed for the duration. Then move on and occupy yourself with constructive activities and leisure pursuits. Don't sit and search for work while watching a film, you won't get much out of either activity. Work fully and relax fully.

... But stay active

Don't veg out. Advice about keeping your body healthy can seem facetious in the face of emotional stress, but it's really important to your overall sense of wellbeing.

Start running, or squatting, or lunging, or whatever takes your fancy – watching the contours of your body change over the course of a few weeks can generate the sense of purpose that losing your job strips away.

If you're not actively exercising make sure you're out of the house for at the very least an hour a day. There's nothing like cabin fever to exacerbate your worries, so keep your mind stimulated by taking it for a walk from time to time.

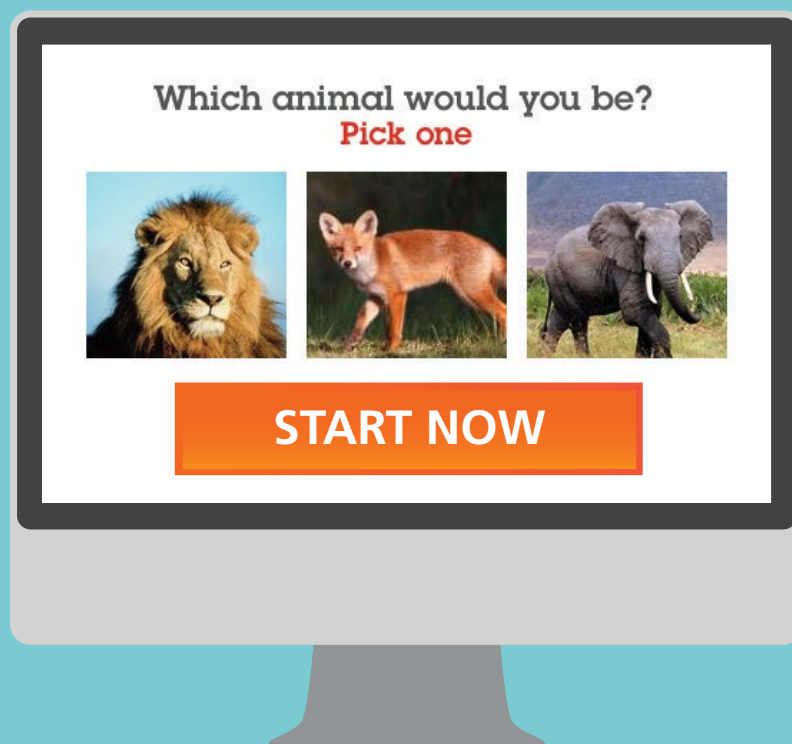
Be realistic

You should never lose your desire to full your professional potential. But it's important not to let the blanket mantras of positive thinking tell you that you can do anything you put your mind to. Sure, it's a big world out there, rife with opportunities, and we would never discourage you from exploring them. Just don't let the chase consume you. Be receptive to new professional experiences but don't get beguiled by grass-is-always-greener thinking, because no job is perfect.

Continue your journey

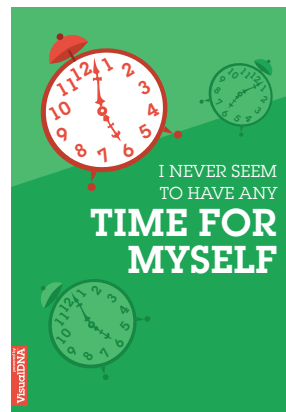
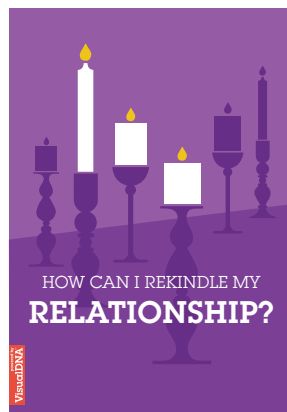
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