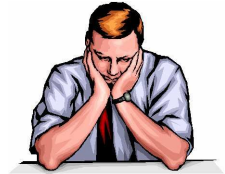


Staying Motivated During Your Job Search

Job hunting when you are unemployed always takes more of a mental and physical toll than looking for a job while you have one, but this is not the time to allow yourself to fall into a depression. Despondency saps vital energy needed to find your next job and when you are lucky enough to land an interview, any hint of hopelessness is certain to eliminate you.



It is not always easy to stay upbeat and motivated during job transition, so before planning your motivational strategy you need to understand that human nature is what it is and there will be times when you will feel down. This is natural, so don't become angry with yourself otherwise it may quickly lead to a downward spiral from which recovery will be all the more difficult and at the extreme, require professional medical attention. Be kind to yourself during this troubled time in your life and your career and allow yourself a certain amount of downtime.

As you plan your motivational strategy, there are many things you can do to inspire yourself.

► Don't Change Your Normal Daily Pattern.

Remember high school physics? Newton's First Law of Motion taught us that *"an object at rest tends to stay at rest and an object in motion tends to stay in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force."*

Don't become your own unbalanced force - resist temptation to stay up later and catch midnight talk shows and old movies, and then sleep in the following morning, thinking you can start your job search at midday. Finding a job is now your full time job, so approach this process with the same rigor and timetable as your previous job.

► Network, Network, Network

One just can't say enough about the power of networking, especially at this critical respite in your career. It is probably the most powerful tool for building and maintaining professional relationships, sharing information with colleagues in your field, forging mentor-mentee relationships, and.....*uncovering career opportunities*. Just meeting with people in your field on a regular basis will help motivate you to find a job so you can share a success story with your existing and new-found colleagues.

► Remain Active in Your Field

Just because you are out of work doesn't mean you can't remain active in your field. Continuing to attend conferences and trade shows will boost your morale and can inspire you to find your next job quickly. If cost is an issue because you no longer have an employer to pick up the tab, search for conferences in your area to avoid out-of-pocket costs for travel.

► Use Downtime to Take Classes

Just being in intellectual conversations about your occupation will help improve your state of mind and keep you motivated.

▶ **Join Job Support Groups**

The empathy and encouragement of supportive peers is particularly uplifting during a job search. The key word here is, “supportive,” because belonging to a group with a common problem often helps stem the depression that surfaces during extended job searches.

Job clubs can be either formal or informal and can be modeled around various constituencies from dedicated groups aimed at a single profession, homemakers looking to return to the workforce, or totally heterogeneous groups open to anyone seeking a job.

It is a publicized fact that unemployed persons belonging to job clubs see their search efforts strengthened and shorter than those who “go it alone.” Introverted people especially gain in these forums.

Support group members also benefit from having an expanded network, exchanging job leads, sharing resume writing and interviewing tips, and a lot of other valuable career strategies and techniques.

▶ **Avoid Downbeats**

Not only do pessimistic individuals set unrealistically low targets for themselves, their negativism transfers to those around them. Avoid downhearted people and situations ruled by naysayers and worrywarts.

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

Winston Churchill.

▶ **Find an Office from Which to Work**

Remember: you do have a full time job - finding a job. Having a regular, professional place to go will create more of a stimulus than operating from your kitchen table in your pajamas.

Most displaced workers do not have access to corporate outplacement facilities, and most also cannot afford to rent furnished, short-term office space from which to conduct their search, but this doesn't mean you cannot find a place to “work.” Ask anyone you know if they have a spare desk you can borrow for a while. This includes colleagues and friends (especially those with small businesses), the corner real estate or law office, your local school, church, Rotary Club or similar associations.

▶ **Get Fit / Stay Fit**

Ever hear of the “runner's high?” Exercise enthusiasts know that strenuous exercise produces natural endorphins in the pituitary gland and hypothalamus, and among other benefits, endorphins produce a sense of well-being that lasts well beyond your aerobics class. So if you are not already playing tennis, running, swimming, or working out at least 3 times a week - see your doctor and start.

▶ **Keep Well Groomed**

Ever notice how you feel better about yourself when you have a stylish “coiffure and couture?” When you look good, you feel good. If cost is an issue because you are in between jobs, don't forgo the manicure and pedicure - do them yourself.

▶ **Join Clubs and Associations**

Like the famous line in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, "*Dad is never so happy as when he's looking forward to something*," anticipating an evening at your local hobby club, community association, prayer group - whatever your passion - will enhance your mood throughout the day and keep you more upbeat during your job search.

▶ **Reconnect with University Alumni Associations**

Like other group settings, getting involved with your university alumni association will help increase your level of motivation.

Plus, it helps you catch-up and network with old acquaintances and make new ones, any of which can lead to job prospects.

▶ **Start a Blog Related to Your Specialty**

Launching a website or blog in your subject matter area promotes yourself and your knowledge on the Internet, helps make new contacts, and gives you a purpose and "sense of working," all of which help create an upbeat mood during your daily routine.

▶ **Socialize As Much As You Can Afford**

Mingling with friends and family is especially important during times like this. Those close to you will understand that you need a little extra "tender loving care" during your job transition, and will go out of their way to do and say the right things to make you feel better about your prospects.

▶ **Consider Self-Help Books**

Note the intentional use of the word, "consider." There is a lot of cynicism about the effectiveness of self-help books, with some pundits even claiming that they provide false hope or go so far as to cause actual harm, but most people believe bibliotherapy helps.

Self-help books draw insights from psychological science on almost every disposition problem imaginable, and teach us how to cultivate positive psychology to counteract the negative.

If you opt to read self-help books, remember three things:

1. The dictionary defines "self help" as the "*action or process of bettering oneself or overcoming one's problems without the aid of others.*" It might be a good idea to discuss your self-diagnosed problem and remedial solution with someone close to you before putting it into action.
2. Self-help books are unlikely to be effective if the topics they address have little relevance to what is sapping your positive energy in finding your next job. Shelves abound with these types of books so pick the right one for your own situation - what is triggering your best buddy's job search depression might not be causing yours.
3. Read them with the principle that they will not alleviate your symptoms of despair, but rather teach you how to understand and strengthen your personal ability to counterbalance the negative forces working against you during your search.

► **Visualize Your Goals**

Picturing goals helps move them from image to reality, so think contrary to the popular phrase, and tell yourself, “You can get there from here.” Just remember also to anticipate and prepare for any obstacles that may get in the way.

► **Volunteer**

Do good - feel good.

Volunteering for your favorite charity will help create an impassioned feeling of usefulness, which you can transfer to your job search.

► **Watch Motivational Movies**

As silly as it may sound, motivational movies tend to spur viewers to similar emotional heights. If the fight scenes in *Rocky* are too brutal for you, listen to the theme song and find movies with inspirational themes to which you can relate. Innumerable titles line the shelves at DVD rental shops, including *Chariots of Fire*, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, *Billy Elliot*, and *Glory Road*, to name a few.

► **Assess Your Spiritual Health**

Reflect inwardly and determine where are you in your spiritual life. If you feel any sense of emptiness, anxiety, hopelessness, apathy or conflict, these may be signs of spiritual poverty in your life and could be the underlying reason for being unmotivated in your job search.



Finally, if these 18 suggestions didn’t inspire you, try watching the 2003 Emmy nominated movie titled, *Homeless to Harvard: The Liz Murray Story*, or read Murray’s own memoir, *Breaking Night*, (Hyperion Books, 2005). Both of these poignant works expose the true story of how Liz Murray, homeless at the age of 15, was awarded a New York Times scholarship for needy students after graduating from New York City’s Humanities Preparatory Academy in only two years, enabling her to attend Harvard University. Murray is now an inspirational speaker for the Washington Speakers Bureau.

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