

Summoning Support

BY EILEEN L. BERMAN



“You’re fired!” is the shot

being heard around the world. Have you heard it recently? Or are you afraid you might hear it soon? If so, you are one of millions in today’s global economy whose emotional structure has either collapsed or is in danger of collapsing. Your ability to cope, to function optimally, to enjoy your life may, indeed, be at risk in the current business scene. Without coping effectively, your chances of getting through this crisis are in danger.

Even if the company suddenly closes its doors, you will feel bereft and suffer emotional pangs of having done something wrong to warrant this happening to you.

In times like these, it is normal to feel a great sense of loss. As a result, you may even feel depressed. Feelings of security – about yourself, your ability to earn a living, your future – are in a meltdown. In order to pull yourself out of the doldrums and get on with your life, you need to find a way to regain some measure of stability so that you can replenish your self-confidence. This is vital if you are to find other opportunities. If you don’t pull yourself together, you will jeopardize the very result you want so badly: to get back in the work force and re-establish your identity as a responsible, productive and worthwhile individual.

If you are to move ahead, it is important for you to commit to reconstructing your life in a way that will resurrect your positive feelings about yourself. By first sitting back and thinking about how you can turn this overwhelming event into a positive force, you will begin to regain your emotional equilibrium that was shattered when you

were cut off from your place of employment.

If you’re still working, you may ask yourself, “How long can I hold on?” The workplace today is fraught with anxiety as jobs continue to be eliminated. Because of the stress that accompanies actual job loss or the anxiety about potential job loss, many people do not take the time to reflect and plan in order to turn danger into opportunity. They proceed in a panic – either sitting around waiting for the axe to fall, or, when unemployed, taking the first job offered which, many times, is not the right one. This serves to keep them in the danger zone.

Given your emotional state and the financial needs of you and your family, what is the most prudent thing to do?

The first thing you need to do is sit down with your family and discuss your fears about being unemployed, finding a job and being able to get through this period financially. If you are currently employed but are afraid that you may lose your job, it is necessary to discuss what precautions you can take now so that you and your family can live with this situation without too much anxiety if this comes to pass.

You have two goals in sharing your anxiety with your family. One is to reassure them (and yourself) that by facing the reality of your job loss and its attendant problems, you can weather this crisis together. If you’re still employed but anxious, by discussing the possibility of unemployment now you will be better prepared to weather it if this becomes reality. This reassurance also helps take the fear out of the equation and allows

everyone to talk openly in a zone of comfort, which brings rational thinking to the fore. Second, this preamble must then lead to a discussion of a realistic financial plan. This plan should be discussed by every member of the family so that lifestyle changes that will allow you to curtail spending and, if possible, increase saving can be implemented immediately. Regardless of whether you have already been “fired” or fear that you will be, it is urgent that you begin to make changes as soon as possible.

There are many factors to discuss concerning lifestyle changes and I shall address these in my next article. Meanwhile, this is a good place to start. The key to getting through any crisis is to discuss your feelings openly with every member of the family and to enlist everyone’s support and help in brainstorming how to get through this period. Frequent family meetings to discuss the status of your employment or unemployment, your current financial situation and the feelings being elicited during this crisis are necessary for a positive recovery.

If you are without family or a support system for expressing your feelings and creating a plan of action, then I recommend seeking professional help.

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