



WTF JUST HAPPENED

MANAGING LAYOFF-INDUCED
ANXIETY AND STRESS



Welcome!



ABOUT ME

Hey there! I'm the (un)lucky recipient of a corporate layoff badge. Yep, after a 27-year marathon in the corporate world and a deep dive into the world of layoffs (we're talking dissertation and a book deep), I got the "Thanks, but we'll take it from here" talk in early October 2023. Talk about a wild, emotional roller coaster ride – and I've had my fair share of those!

This journey, though, isn't just about the ups and downs. It's packed with real, raw insights into the whole layoff saga – the kind they don't cover in employee handbooks. It's been an eye-opener, to say the least, and I'm here to spill the beans. Why? Because mental health isn't just a buzzword; it's the real deal, especially when the layoff thunderstorm hits.

So, what's in this guide, you ask? It's not your average, run-of-the-mill, "let's just get through this" spiel. Nope. I'm bringing you the insider's playbook – a mix of straight talk, practical wisdom, and a shoulder to lean on. I've walked the layoff walk, felt the feels, and now, I'm turning those lessons into your lifeline.

We're in this together. Through this guide, we'll tackle layoff-induced stress and anxiety with strategies that actually make sense (and work!). I'll share tips, heartfelt advice, and maybe a few laughs along the way because, let's face it, we could all use a chuckle.

Welcome aboard this quirky, caring community where understanding and support are the norms, not the exceptions. You've got the grit and resilience to bounce back from this. Let's turn this chapter into a story of growth and triumph, shall we?

Tracy Shroyer, PhD

UNDERSTANDING LAYOFF-INDUCED STRESS

Welcome to the club no one wants to join – the Layoff Club. Like many of you, I've been down this road. Picture it: a cocktail of mixed emotions and a whole lot of "what now?" Through this guide, I'm here to share the real, unfiltered side of layoffs – combining personal experiences with some hard-earned wisdom.

Let's face it, layoffs hit like a freight train of feelings. I've ridden this train too. You start with shock and disbelief, then graduate to a cocktail of frustration and annoyance. I'm here to walk you through these emotions, helping you understand how normal and expected they are, especially when your professional world gets turned upside down.

Ever thought layoffs are like grief in a business suit? It's true. From my own layoff saga and years of studying them, I've realized how closely they mirror Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's stages of grief:

1. **Denial:** First comes the "This can't be real" phase. It's your mind's way of softening the initial blow.
2. **Anger:** Then, the heat rises. "Why me?" becomes a regular mental refrain. It's natural to feel a bit bitter – towards everyone from your former boss to fate itself.
3. **Bargaining:** Here's where you replay every "what if" and "if only." It's the mental reruns of what could have saved you from the layoff.
4. **Depression:** This stage is heavy – filled with sadness, regret, and a sense of loss. It's not just about losing a job; it's about losing a part of your daily identity.
5. **Acceptance:** Eventually, there's a shift. Acceptance isn't about being happy with what happened. It's about recognizing it and starting to rebuild.

As someone currently navigating these choppy waters, I can tell you – it's okay to ride this emotional wave. It's not a straight path. You might loop back to previous stages, and that's perfectly fine. It's part of healing and finding your way to a new beginning.

Remember, while layoffs are tough, they're not the end. You're not alone in this journey. Together, we'll explore the paths to not just cope, but to thrive post-layoff.

UNDERSTANDING LAYOFF-INDUCED STRESS

Practical Steps to Navigate the Stages of Grief After a Layoff

- **Acknowledge Your Feelings:** It's okay to not be okay. Allow yourself the space to feel every emotion that comes up. Journaling isn't just for teenagers – it's a powerful tool to unpack your feelings. Scribble, rant, or doodle your way through those emotions.
- **Seek Support:** Lean on your squad – friends, family, or even a pro to talk it out. There's no award for going solo on this journey. Sharing your story can be surprisingly liberating, and hey, it's nice to have someone remind you that you're not alone in this.
- **Engage in Self-Care:** Self-care isn't selfish; it's essential. Do what makes you feel good, be it breaking a sweat, eating your greens, or catching those Zs. And if you're up for it, give mindfulness or meditation a whirl – it's like a spa day for your brain.
- **Set Small, Achievable Goals:** Feeling lost? Start small. Ticking off achievable goals can be a game-changer. Update that resume, hit a webinar, or learn something new. It's about celebrating the small wins and getting back that sense of control.
- **Focus on the Future:** Flip the script on that layoff. It's not just an end – it's a gateway to new beginnings. Maybe it's time to chase that dream job, pivot to a new path, or just explore something different. The future's not just bright; it's yours for the taking.

Remember, a layoff is more than just a career hiccup – it's a full-blown emotional rollercoaster. And that's perfectly normal. By embracing this journey, you're not just surviving; you're setting the stage for an epic comeback. Let's turn this page and start writing your next chapter.

IMMEDIATE COPING STRATEGIES

The days following a layoff are crucial. Based on my own journey, I'll share practical tips for those first difficult days - from establishing a routine to seeking support. You'll learn about mindfulness and relaxation techniques that I found particularly effective in calming immediate anxieties.

Establishing a Routine:

- *Set a consistent wake-up time and bedtime.*
 - I actually became a night owl and flipped my schedule after being laid off. It was weird, but once I embraced it, my productivity went through the roof!
- *Schedule regular meals and healthy eating habits.*
- *Allocate time for job search activities each day.*
 - I started to look for new jobs and ensured I kept track of those I applied for and when I went back to check in on the status. This helped me not feel overwhelmed.
- *Include periods for physical exercise.*

Seeking Support:

- *Reach out to friends and family for emotional support.*
 - The first thing I did after learning about being laid off was to reach out to friends and family for support. This was different for me, but I knew laying in bed wasn't going to help.
- *Consider joining a support group for individuals who have been laid off.*
- *Look for professional counseling if feeling overwhelmed.*

Mindfulness Techniques:

- *Practice daily meditation using apps like Headspace or Calm.*
- *Engage in short, regular breathing exercises to reduce stress.*
 - I was able to get some help for this, and realized I was not fully breathing out and releasing the tension and stress. Once I started to practice this, I felt so much better.
- *Try mindfulness activities like mindful walking or gardening.*

Relaxation Techniques:

- *Allocate time for hobbies and activities that relax you.*
 - I started to take naps during the middle of the day to refuel. It was so helpful for my mindset. Something else I started to do was sit around and watch TV. This isn't something I'd be as likely to do pre-layoff, but having doses of Netflix binging helped me to relax and direct my mind somewhere else for small doses of time.
- *Practice yoga or Tai Chi to combine relaxation with physical activity.*
- *Listen to soothing music or engage in creative arts.*

IMMEDIATE COPING STRATEGIES

Maintaining a Positive Outlook:

- *Start a gratitude journal to focus on positive aspects of your life.*
 - A friend of mine got in a nightly routine of writing down 3 wins from the day (no matter how small or big), as well as 3 things she was grateful for.
- *Set small, achievable goals to maintain a sense of accomplishment.*
- *Limit exposure to stressful news or social media.*

Engaging in Self-Reflection:

- *Use this time to reflect on your career goals and aspirations.*
- *Consider what you enjoyed most in your previous job and what you'd like to change.*
- *Explore online courses or workshops to enhance skills or learn new ones.*
 - This is one of the first things I did. I didn't know at first what to do with my time, but with a love for learning, I found a certification program that I was interested in prior to my layoff, but didn't think I'd have the time to dedicate to it. I signed up and completed that within a few weeks. I also found a learning path on a topic of interest in LinkedIn Learning and started to work through those courses.

These tips are designed to help manage the immediate aftermath of a layoff, focusing on maintaining mental well-being, seeking support, and laying the groundwork for future career steps.

What are things on this list that you are already doing?

What are 1-2 items you could take away from this list, or others that came to mind?

LONG-TERM COPING MECHANISMS

Adapting to life after a layoff is a process of building resilience and adaptability. I'll share strategies that helped me manage ongoing stress, including journaling, counseling, and finding support groups. This section emphasizes the importance of building a personal support network, something I found invaluable in my own experience.

Journaling for Reflection and Clarity:

- *Write daily or weekly to process thoughts and emotions.*
- *Use journal prompts to explore feelings about the layoff and future aspirations.*
- *Reflect on positive experiences and lessons learned from past roles.*
 - I began to look at my layoff as a blessing or a gift versus something bad happening to me. I know this isn't realistic for everyone, and people thought I was off my rocker a bit for saying it.

Seeking Professional Counseling:

- *Consider therapy to navigate complex emotions and develop coping strategies.*
- *Explore different types of counseling, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy or career counseling.*
- *Utilize online platforms for therapy if in-person sessions are not feasible.*
 - There are platforms like betterhelp, Faithful Counseling, and talkspace are a few options that provide these types of services.

Joining Support Groups:

- *Look for local or online support groups for individuals who have been laid off.*
- *Participate in discussions and share experiences to gain perspective and support.*
- *Use these groups as a networking opportunity to connect with others in similar situations.*

Building a Personal Support Network:

- *Reach out to friends and family members who understand and can offer emotional support.*
 - The one thing I couldn't do much of while I was working was meet up with friends of family for breakfast or lunch. I can't tell you how many of these I have had in the few weeks post-layoff. It was a great feeling to catch up with these people!
- *Connect with former colleagues or mentors for professional advice and encouragement.*
 - There were a few others from my team that were laid off at the same time, and I leveraged text messaging and phone calls with some of them, which was helpful.
- *Engage in community activities or volunteer work to build new relationships.*

LONG-TERM COPING MECHANISMS

Developing Resilience:

- *Practice mindfulness and meditation to improve emotional regulation.*
- *Set achievable goals to rebuild confidence and a sense of accomplishment.*
 - You may think you'll have all the time in the world now that you're not working, but the truth is that your body needs time to process and heal. I felt more overwhelmed NOT having my full-time job anymore. Something I started to do was, every time I thought of something that I needed to do, I'd add it to a list. Then I would pick 1-2 items from the list to do when I wasn't working through the grief.
- *Embrace flexibility and openness to new opportunities.*
 - A friend of mine sent me a role that was a good fit for my skills, and not something I would have considered posting for before. Be open to potential opportunities, and engage your friends, family, connections, etc. as to what types of roles may be a good next steps for you!

Focusing on Personal Development:

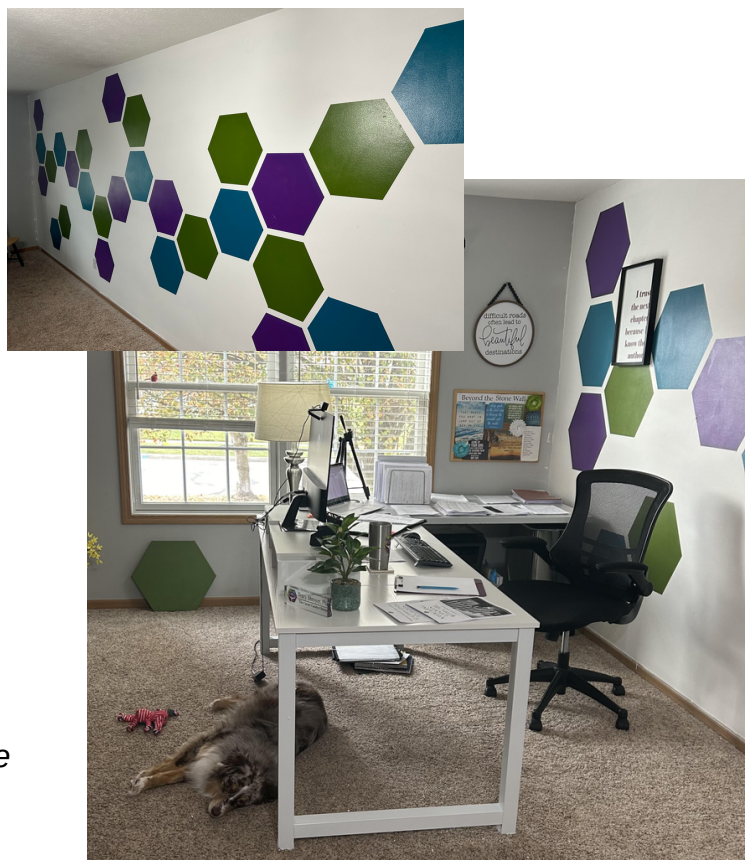
- *Identify skills you want to develop or enhance for your career.*
- *Enroll in courses or workshops for personal and professional growth.*
- *Read books and listen to podcasts on personal development and career resilience.*

Maintaining Physical Health:

- *Engage in regular physical activity to reduce stress and boost mood.*
- *Prioritize healthy eating and sufficient sleep to maintain physical well-being.*
- *Explore stress-reducing activities like yoga, hiking, or other sports.*

Engaging in New Hobbies or Interests:

- *Take this time to explore interests or hobbies you may have put aside.*
- *Consider creative outlets like painting, writing, or music as stress relievers.*
 - I really struggled to go into my home office after I was laid off. Something I like to do is paint and be creative. I talked with a friend and came up with a new refreshed look and feel. See pics -->
- *Use hobbies as a way to establish a new routine and sense of purpose.*



PLANNING YOUR NEXT STEPS

Planning your next steps is vital. Here, I'll guide you through goal-setting and creating a plan for moving forward, drawing on my own path to finding new opportunities. This section includes tips for job searching, career reevaluation, and resources for professional development.

- **Effective Goal-Setting:**
 - Utilize the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) criteria for setting goals.
 - Set short-term goals for immediate action and long-term goals for career direction.
 - Regularly review and adjust your goals as needed.
- **Creating a Forward-Looking Plan:**
 - Develop a structured plan with clear steps towards your career objectives.
 - Include timelines and milestones to track progress.
 - Plan for contingencies and be flexible to adjust as circumstances change.
- **Strategies for Job Searching:**
 - Update your resume to reflect your most recent experiences and skills.
 - Leverage LinkedIn and other professional networks for job opportunities.
 - Tailor your application materials (cover letters, resumes) to each job you apply for.
- **Career Reevaluation:**
 - Reflect on what you enjoyed and didn't enjoy in your previous roles.
 - Consider potential career shifts or new industries that align with your interests and skills.
 - Conduct informational interviews to learn about different roles and industries.
- **Resources for Professional Development:**
 - Identify skills gaps and seek out relevant courses or certifications.
 - Utilize online platforms like Coursera, Udemy, or LinkedIn Learning for skill-building.
 - Attend webinars and workshops related to your field or areas of interest.
- **Networking for Opportunities:**
 - Reach out to your professional network for advice, insights, and job leads.
 - Join professional associations or groups in your field.
 - Attend industry meetups, conferences, or online networking events.

PLANNING YOUR NEXT STEPS

- Personal Branding:
 - Develop a personal brand that reflects your professional identity and values.
 - Create or update your personal website or portfolio showcasing your work and accomplishments.
 - Engage on professional social media platforms to increase your visibility in your industry.
- Maintaining a Positive Mindset:
 - Stay optimistic but realistic about job prospects and timelines.
 - Practice self-care to manage stress and maintain a positive outlook.
 - Celebrate small successes and progress along your job search journey.

What are 1-3 items you plan to do next?

When do you plan to start these?

Who is someone that you can tell, and could keep you accountable for these steps?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This section includes a curated list of resources – books, websites, apps, and more – that were instrumental in my journey and can be in yours. You'll also find information on professional mental health services and online support communities.

- **Podcasts and Webinars:**

- Search 'professional development,' 'career support,' 'learning,' and more on your podcast platform of choice. There is also a "Let's Talk about Layoffs" podcast that you might find interesting.
- Webinars on LinkedIn Learning for enhancing professional skills.

- **Online Courses and Workshops:**

- Check out "Rock Your Resume" or "Leveraging LinkedIn" courses through <https://www.tracyshroyerphd.com/your-career/>.
- Explore "Career Success Specialization" on Coursera.
- Participate in skill-building workshops offered by General Assembly or through LinkedIn Learning.

- **Career Coaching Services, Networking Groups, LinkedIn, Resume and Cover Letter Resources:**

- Check out Dr. Tracy's services at <https://www.tracyshroyerphd.com/>.
- Learn to optimize your LinkedIn profile for job searches through my "Upgrade Your LinkedIn Profile" program.
- Search for Facebook groups that may be of interest based on key search terms aligned with your area(s) of interest.

- **Interview Preparation Tools:**

- Follow @interviewcoachellie on Instagram
- Practice interviews with Big Interview's interactive platform, or within LinkedIn.

- **Financial Planning Resources:**

- Budget and track finances with Mint.
- Unemployment benefit information at USA.gov.

- **Stress Management and Wellness Apps:**

- Relax and focus with guided meditation on Headspace.
- Track nutrition and exercise using MyFitnessPal.

- **Job Search Engines and Career Portals:**

- Discover opportunities on job search engines like Indeed, LinkedIn Jobs, SimplyHired, FlexJobs, CareerBuilder, and The Ladders.
- Each platform offers unique listings and tools to aid in your job search.

SUMMARY

What a journey!

This guide isn't just academic insights and pro tips – it's also a real-life layoff saga, mine included. We've tackled the emotional rollercoaster of layoffs, diving into the practical strategies that have been my go-to in navigating these choppy waters.

From creating routines that don't feel like chores to mindfulness that genuinely helps, I've shared it all. We've explored resilience, career shifts, and how to bounce back better than ever.

But here's the gist: this guide is more than advice; it's a story of resilience and a companion through the layoff storm.

Layoffs may be tough, but they don't get the last word. You're gearing up for an incredible comeback. So, let's turn this layoff into your launchpad. The next chapter? It's looking bright, and it's all yours.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?



Discover a world of insights and personalized coaching at <https://www.tracyshroyerphd.com>.

Whether you're navigating post-layoff challenges, seeking career growth, or just in need of a strategic pivot, my tailored coaching is designed to guide you through every phase of your professional path.

Looking for a community where career conversations thrive? Join my FREE Facebook group, "Let's Talk About Layoffs." This group is a vibrant space for anyone seeking support, insight, or camaraderie in their career journey, layoff or not. Here, you can connect, share experiences, and grow with others who understand the ups and downs of professional life.

With my blend of professional expertise and personal experience, I'm committed to guiding you towards resilience and success, no matter where you are in your career.

DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this checklist is for general informational purposes only. It is not intended as legal, financial, HR, or professional advice and should not be considered as such. You should consult with a professional to obtain specific advice for your situation.

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