

OVERCOMING THE UNEMPLOYED "STIGMA"



In the movie "The Company Men," several of the managers had gotten laid off. One of them is terrified that the neighbors were going to find out. He dressed in the ninies in the morning, and then leaves his home, only to return again at dinner time just like he would if he were still employed. Apparently, he perceives the social stigma of unemployment to be higher than the many negative consequences of what he is doing--living two different lives, missing opportunities within his network and the inconvenience and inefficiency of going out in a suit and doing nothing all day. In short, a behavior that is emotionally destructive, wastes valuable time and does not receive as many positive results. **This is the issue of social stigma:**

1. **Your Own Perception:** You are blaming yourself for your loss of job, or you feel like the victim. Either way you are still in shock over it. You may even think that your value to the society has gone away. You think that there is a social stigma attached to your situation without ever knowing whether this is the case, or not.
2. **The Perception of Others:** People may look down on you. Yes, for someone who has never experienced job loss and doesn't fully understand the job market today, your unemployment is your fault.

The good news is that you can largely overcome both of these issues. Once you have conquered your own fear and act accordingly, you will also raise the probabilities of overcoming any negative perception of others. **How to overcome your own negative perception:**

1. **Understand the Facts:** Losing a job is nothing unusual during your 30-40 years of work until retirement. You have to see it coming. Your risk of being dismissed is independent to your level of hierarchy, education or skills. Even if your performance doesn't play a role. If a merger happens in your company, or a cost cutting program eliminates your unit, then your job may be history. All it is, is bad luck, do not blame yourself.
2. **Change Your Mindset:** Do not think of yourself as "unemployed." Rather, view yourself as someone that is just "in between jobs," someone who is given some time in exchange for losing your job. You may not even know, at the time of your lay-off, whether or not employment, or self employment, or anything else, is set in your future.
3. **Use Your Time Strategically:** Do not just go around applying for jobs and watching TV the rest of the day. Use your time more wisely. Maybe you would have better job prospects if you were certified in your field? Then just go for it. Do you want to check out a different city with better opportunities in your area of expertise? Then your time has come. Have you always been too busy to lose some unwanted weight? Put in the effort today. The options to use your time to lay the groundwork for your personal and professional future are countless.