

## **Career Builders**

By Mary-Alane Wiltse

Unfortunately, over 70 members of our community who work for W.B. McGuire will be losing their jobs at the end of this month, when the business closes its Hudson operation. According to stress management experts the top four stressors people can face during the course of their lives are dealing with the death of a loved one, going through a divorce, coping with a major illness, and getting laid-off from a job. The common thread between all these events is loss.

For some reason many people tend to downplay the emotional effect losing a job can have on their wellbeing. But, jobs not only provide financial stability, they also provide a sense of community and a sense of our own identity.

Whenever we lose something that is important to us, we go through a grieving process that has four basic stages. First, we face shock over what has occurred. We then become angry that this event has happened to us. At some point we move into the mourning stage where we feel sadness over our loss. And, finally, we accept the event and make steps to move on with our lives.

The amount of time the grieving process takes and the intensity of the emotions involved varies with the importance of the loss being faced, but the four stages are always the same.

As an employment and training professional for many years, I have helped thousands of people deal with the loss of their jobs. If you ever have to face this situation there are certain steps you can take to make the process easier.

The best way to deal with the shock of losing a job is to give it a few days to sink in. You need to let your family and close friends know what is happening, but other than that, the best strategy is just to avoid making any major decisions during this time frame.

There is only one decision that needs to be made when the feelings of anger begin. You need to decide not to take out your frustration on your loved ones or on your employer. Obviously, you shouldn't take it out on your family because it is not their fault, and you also need to remember that they are forced to cope with this loss, as well. Becoming angry at your employer won't help either. Lay-offs are business decisions that have nothing to do with you personally. Besides, telling off your boss may jeopardize your ability to use her as a reference when applying for new jobs.

Venting your anger, however, is important. Co-workers who are facing the same situation are a good choice. Misery does like company. This is also the time to contact the free community services that are available.

I, of course, recommend the Workforce New York Career Center at Columbia-Greene Community College (because we are the government and we are here to help). We understand what you are going through and we get paid to listen to you vent. You can complain, use "PG" language, and even scream once or twice if you feel the need. We will understand.

Now, if you are like the people at McGuire, where everyone is getting laid-off at the same time, then we come right to your company and talk to you before your last day of work. However, if you are part of a smaller lay-off, then you will have to come to us. In fact, if you are eligible for Unemployment Insurance benefits you will even receive a

written invitation to come and visit (and, because we are the government it is an offer you can't refuse).

An important step you should not avoid is making sure your finances are in order. Worrying about money when you are already stressed can quickly make you feel overwhelmed. If you find that you are having trouble paying your bills, you will need to deal with the situation immediately. Avoiding the problem will only make things worse. The Career Center can put you in contact with free credit counseling services that can help you work with your creditors to lower your payments while you are out of work.

When you get to the Career Center we will also be able to help you deal with the sense of sadness and loneliness you might experience when you move to the third stage. You will find friendly staff members to help you and you will get the chance to meet other job seekers that are facing the same situation you are. You can use our Career Resource Room as your "office away from home" as you start the process of looking for a new job. Or, if you decide that you are going to need to upgrade your skills so you can get a new job, we can help you with that, too. We can help you figure out the training you may need, help you find a school, and help you arrange for financial aid to pay for it.

Whatever path you choose to take you should consider us a resource. You will feel less alone and will be able to move through the grieving process and take positive steps towards your new future.

*For more information on the services available through the Workforce New York Career Center, visit our website at [www.columbiagreenworks.org](http://www.columbiagreenworks.org), or call 828-4181 ext. 5510.*