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Job Seekers

Twelve Steps for the Unemployed

Step 1

File a claim for unemployment insurance at your local state unemployment office on the first business day after you lose your job. Your benefit payments will help bridge the paycheck gap until you find another job.

Step 2

Unemployment is one of the most stressful events you will ever go through. Whether you've known about your termination for months or you just got your pink slip this morning, you're likely to experience a variety of emotions ranging from guilt and sadness to anger and depression. The important thing to keep in mind is that your feelings are normal and that you need to give yourself the proper time to work through them. Take the next week off. Sleep in, have lunch with friends, or work out.

Step 3

Go through your checkbook register or your debit card receipts. Determine how and where you spend your money. Find ways to cut unnecessary expenses. Create a barebones budget (with your spouse/partner, if applicable) and stick to it.

Step 4

Writing a good resume takes time. Spend as much time as necessary putting together a resume that accurately describes your qualifications and achievements. Whenever possible, list measurable results and concrete examples of your achievements. Here's a real-life example: Led a customer service project that culminated in a 20 percent decrease in customer complaints within three months.

Step 5

Although each and every cover letter you write must be customized for the company to which it is being sent, it doesn't hurt to have several well-written paragraphs ready and waiting. You can customize this draft in the weeks to come when applying to each prospective employers.

Step 6

It doesn't take long for a job seeker to learn that the old statement, "it's not what you know, but who you know," really is true. Only 25% of jobs are found through help wanted or head hunters. Knowing someone on the inside or getting your foot in the door is key. A good place to start networking is with your former co-workers, friends and family members. Ask them if they know of any opportunities in your field or if they know of anyone who may have an opening in the industry in which you are interested.

Step 7

During a job search, first impressions are critical. Make sure you have at least one interview suit ready to go so that you are prepared when you receive an invitation to interview. Although most companies have business casual dress codes, casual dress is never appropriate on a job interview. On the contrary, job interview attire is a critical component of your job search that must not be overlooked.

Step 8

Experts suggest that job seekers spend at least three hours preparing for each interview. You should research the company with which you are interviewing and the industry in which it operates. You also should draft concise answers to the most commonly asked interview questions such as why you want to work for the company and what you can do for the company. To demonstrate your interest in the position, you also should plan to ask the interviewer several questions of your own such as the skills the ideal candidate will possess and how a typical day looks in the job.

Step 9

Looking for a job is a full-time job. Make sure your friends and family know that you are off-limits between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. each day.

Step 10

Look for ways to expand your skill sets while you have the time to do so. Is there a computer program you've always wanted to learn and never had the time? How about an executive seminar or workshop that you think would be interesting but couldn't afford the time out of the office? Take advantage of your time off by using it to learn a new skill. Learning anything new can be a huge boost to your self-confidence.

Step 11

After 5 p.m., your time belongs to you. It's more important than ever that you let off steam by participating in activities you enjoy. Take a jog, visit a museum, accept a babysitting job or rent some movies. Do what you enjoy . . . you've earned it.

Step 12

One of the worst things you can do after leaving a job is to isolate yourself. If you were part of a mass lay off at your company, stay in touch with your positive-minded former co-workers. Accept invitations from friends and family members to go out. Invite your friends over to watch movies or to exercise together. The key is staying in circulation and staying positive through interaction with people.