

What is a Different Perspective on Job Loss?

I Was Just Thinking.....

....that pink slip season is soon upon us, and it might be a good idea to look at it from a different point of view to mitigate the level of trauma involved. The Universe has ways and ways of saying “It’s time to move – move on, move out, move up, move into a different picture of yourself. Losing a job, even if it is an expected loss, has a number of layers of feeling inherent in it, much like a seven-layer cake. There’s the top, and obvious, layer of “Oh my God! How will I eat and/or feed my family?” The next layer down is the one of structure. As humans, we both need and rebel against structure. Whether it’s a long- or short-term job from which we’ve just been let go, there is the moment of “What’ll I do all day?”

The next layer down is one of anger. “I’ve given this company/situation/boss so much of my time and effort, how could they/he/she do this to me!” And one more layer below is the body-blow to self-esteem, self-worth, self-image. We then come to the layer of loss of colleagues, co-workers, customers. In many cases, an entire social framework is built around the workplace, and huge stress accrues from its disappearance. Below that is the crucial layer of identity. We live in a culture that doesn’t ask, “Who are you?”, but instead consistently asks the questions “What do you do for a living? How do I define you? What slot do I put you in?”

While all of these layers of reaction are true – even quite appropriate – there is another way to understand the phenomenon of losing a job. We each choose, before we are born, a specific agency for the lifetime ahead, and we set markers for ourselves along the road. If we have stepped off our own paths, or have hit a place where the road of our lives is about to bend signifying change, a marker will be activated. The loss of a job is one of those markers.

In spite of all the difficulties intrinsic to job loss, there is also life space available that is missing when work takes up anywhere from eight to eighteen hours a day. Both the job loss and the resultant space are in your life for purpose. Your task is to step around all the muck raked up through such a loss and find the garden. Here in this garden space you can begin to find who you really are: Are you, after all, defined even in your own mind by your job? Are you, even in your own mind, limited by the requirements and expectations placed on you by the work you have been doing? Within this newly opened space, and in this newly planted garden of yourself, you can look for what you want in your next phase: Are you happy and fulfilled on the corporate ladder, in the mechanic shop, in the educational system/legal system/medical system? You can, as today's buzzword would have it, think outside the box: Must you stay in the family business, on Wall Street, at the Parks Department? Or can you really take a deep look inside yourself and re-assess your skills and talents to find an unusual way in which they might be used to greater benefit for yourself and the community?

Should you be one of the lucky ones and receive a pink slip in the next month or so, have your immediate reaction. Let it spend itself in tears, or fear, or anger, or pain. Then begin to walk.

Walk in the evening, looking at the stars, and ask yourself the questions above tailored to fit your particular situation. Walk at sunrise, marveling at its beauty and its heralding of a brand-new day of wonder and exploration. Walk at mid-day (with a hat and sunscreen, of course) and feel the heat of the most intense rays of the sun filling you with new resolve to find your passion and your power and put them into practice. Let yourself be open to unexpected insights and ideas that will come flooding into your mind when the clearing of your space is accomplished.

Know that the loss of this job is the opening of a door onto a new and fabulous adventure!