

CAREERS NOW

By Joyce Lain Kennedy

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EXPERT TIPS FOR REJECTION RECOVERY

DEAR JOYCE: After being downsized four months ago and spending most waking hours trying to get employed, I'm facing the holidays in a funk. I'm discouraged and depressed. A person can only take so much rejection. What can you tell me? – S.C.

Feelings of inadequacy stemming from a heavy dose of rejection can ruin your future job search. Employers aren't looking to hang crepe. Their familiar mantra calling for new hires to have a positive attitude is chanted even louder in these downturn days.

Consider the following snippets of advice from several specialists about making rejection recovery happen for you, even when the job market isn't cooperating.

Get used to rejection. “The job hunting process is nothing but a series of rejections with an occasional piece of good news thrown in just to keep you from sticking your head in the oven. Getting rejected doesn't mean you're doing it wrong; it means you're doing it right! In fact, I tell job hunters that if they aren't getting rejected a lot, then either they aren't job hunting hard enough or they aren't searching for a job that represents a step up for them.” — Paul Powers, Ph.D. (drpaulpowers.com), management psychologist and author of “Winning Job Interviews, Revised Edition” (Career Press).

Make lemonade from rejection. “Some people are at their best even in the toughest times — positive, energized and taking productive action. Stop being out of work and go do something. Reach out to local nonprofit organizations and ask how you can help them. You'll keep your skills sharp and do something fulfilling.” — Noah Blumenthal, executive coach (leadingprinciples.com) and author of “Be the Hero: Three Powerful Ways to Overcome Challenges in Work and Life” (Berrett-Koehler).

Fight rejection's low self-esteem. “The core of our being becomes vulnerable when we're out of a job. ‘So what do you do?’ becomes a dreaded question. We resort to a true euphemism, ‘I'm between jobs.’ It's very hard to muster the words ‘I'm unemployed,’ because those words seem to carry the meaning that ‘I'm damaged.’” — summarized from a helpful six-page article published by the career coaching network The Five O'Clock Club.

Read it on the network's site: fiveoclockclub.com; click on Free Articles, then on 2009, and then on “Emotional Roller Coaster.” The article contains 10 suggestions to help you deal with stress and “get off the couch and do the work required to find a job.”

Purposely prevent rejection reactions. “Don’t forget to have three hours of fun a week because you’ll interview better. Ignore the news about downsizings. It will take your energy away.” — Kate Wendleton, president of The Five O’Clock Club.

Develop emotional resilience to rejection. “Using the power of the mind, take 10 minutes daily to relax, close your eyes and daydream in minute detail about having your ideal job. Engage all your senses.

“ Imagine yourself as a star performer giving a top interview performance; mentally watch yourself on an inner movie screen as you use a remote control to stop, revise and replay any segment you are not satisfied with.

“ Repeat positive affirmations, such as ‘If I don’t get the offer, there’s another, better opportunity waiting to be discovered by me.’ Your subconscious will get the message that you want and expect nothing short of success.” — Summarized from writing by Lynn Joseph, Ph.D. (drlynnjoseph.com), psychology and career development specialist and author of “The Job-Loss Recovery Program Guide: The Ultimate Visualization System for Landing a Great Job Now, Second Edition” (Discovery Dynamics).

Kiss off rejection. Summing up action steps to battle beaten-down, self-defeating feelings, “Practice, practice, practice until you eventually get numb on rejections.” — Brian Klemmer (klemmer.com), leadership motivational speaker and author of “The Compassionate Samurai: Being Extraordinary in an Ordinary World” (Hay House).

These suggestions are not pom-poms but serious approaches to overcoming disabling stress and disillusionment caused by your unemployment status. Try all of them — or at least the ones that you think hold the most promise for you.

E-mail career questions for possible use in this column to Joyce Lain Kennedy at jlk@sunfeatures.com; use Reader Question for subject line. Or mail her at Box 368, Cardiff, CA 92007.

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