

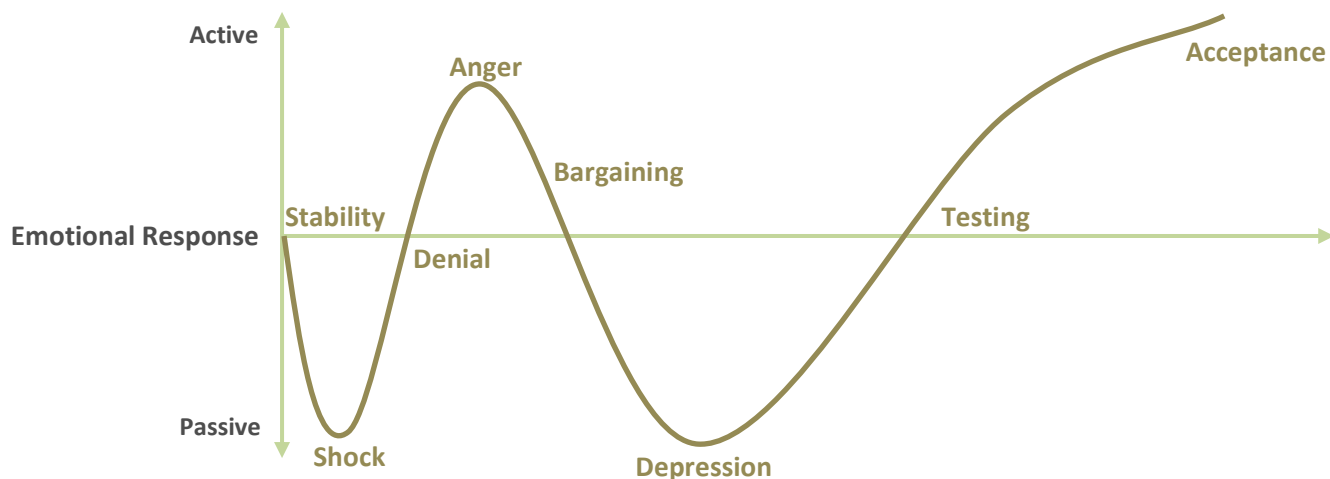
UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTION OF CHANGE

For most people, the loss of their job can be a testing time emotionally. You may find yourself experiencing many emotions that feel unusual and uncomfortable. This is entirely normal. Involuntary job loss can sometimes feel akin to the loss of a family member. In fact, much of our understanding of how to cope with job loss stems from research carried out in the field of grieving by a Swiss researcher, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross.

Kübler-Ross studied and documented the cycle of emotional states that is often referred to as the Grief Cycle. The grief response applies to most people who experience change when they *perceive* that change to be a significant negative event.

THE GRIEF CYCLE

The Grief Cycle is reflected in the chart below, indicating the roller-coaster ride of activity and passivity as we adapt to change.



We will discuss each of the 7 stages here to help you identify these as you may experience them.

- 1) **Shock stage (Immobilisation):** Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.
- 2) **Denial stage:** Not acknowledging the news or its impact.
- 3) **Anger stage:** Frustrated expression of emotion.
- 4) **Bargaining stage:** Seeking for a way out with negotiated alternatives.
- 5) **Depression stage:** Final realisation of the inevitable.
- 6) **Testing stage:** Seeking realistic solutions.
- 7) **Acceptance stage:** Finding the way forward.

Keep in mind that these are not necessarily sequential. You may not experience them all and you may not experience them in order. Everyone has a different path.

SHOCK STAGE (Immobilisation)

The first reaction to hearing the bad news is usually one of shock. We may initially appear as if we have not reacted at all to the news. We may nod and accept the news without appearing to be troubled by it. Inside, we're frozen and the facts haven't sunk in yet. To fully appreciate the situation, we may need to hear the message several times.

DENIAL STAGE

Denial is a common reaction. We effectively close our eyes to the evidence and pretend that nothing has happened. This may also be seen in a denial of the impact of the news or our reaction to it. For instance, "No, I'm not concerned".

ANGER STAGE

The next step after denial can be anger or frustration and we all express these differently. Whoever is in the way is likely to be blamed. The phrase 'Why me?' may be repeated in an endless loop in our heads. We can also hear 'Why not you?' which fuels our anger at those who are not affected.

BARGAINING STAGE

At some point there may be a round of bargaining where we seek ways to avoid the situation altogether by negotiating alternatives. Bargaining is an expression of hope that the news is reversible. In organisations, it includes offering to work for less money, be relocated or to be demoted.

DEPRESSION STAGE

The inevitability of the news sinks in and we accept the reality. A tendency to focus on the negative makes it harder to accept support from others and work on solutions. This can take the form of procrastination and taking too long to complete tasks or looping on negative thoughts and the worst-case scenario.

TESTING STAGE

With time and support we start to look forward, we start identifying options and constructive things that we can do. As this activity starts to take effect we emerge with renewed clarity and focus. This is where professional support can really start to facilitate constructive change.

ACCEPTANCE STAGE

The final stage is back to one of stability, where we are actively involved in moving on to the next phase of our lives. You'll seek new work and career opportunities. Acceptance becomes apparent when we take ownership of our actions and outcomes. We start to do things, take note of the results and then change our actions in response. We are increasingly happier and more content as we find our way forward.

SO WHAT CAN I DO?

Two of the most important pieces of advice throughout this entire process are:

1) Keep Talking

Maintain communication with those who can provide you with support. This includes your family, close friends, and your professional network.

2) Look after Yourself

Looking after yourself puts you in the best position to make the most out of this opportunity. The 6 cylinders of wellness have been provided to you to assist in this regard. Your scorecard and action plan will help you to make small changes for substantial benefit.

Finally, realise that the feelings discussed here are natural. It's powerful to accept and acknowledge them.

ESTABLISHING A NEW NORMALITY

There is no doubt that life will appear quite different for some time. Many of your established routines will change, boundaries will shift and you will find yourself dealing with new and sometimes unexpected situations.



What types of change can you expect?

Well, in the first instance the daily routine of work.

If this is the case for you, set yourself some new routines. Set times for certain activities, such as going for a walk, reading the papers, working on components of your career transition, spending time with your family and simply enjoying doing things that you have not had time to do for ages. Have lunch with your partner, learn a new skill and reconnect with old friends.

You will find that you will settle into a new routine quickly and you will determine how much time you will need to spend on your program. Take it from us, it's unlikely that you will need or want to spend all of your working hours on your career transition.