

WISCONSIN

**JOB  
CENTER**

# Adjusting to Unemployment



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Working gives people meaning to their lives. Our daily schedules and routines are often dictated by the work we do.

When we become unemployed, usually through no fault of our own, it can have a devastating impact on our emotional well-being. Even more distressing is the realization that our talents and job skills are dispensable.

Feelings of inadequacy and guilt, along with questions of self-worth, are very common with a job loss. It is possible for individuals to feel responsible for a job loss even though circumstances were dictated by the economy.

Remember, unemployment will be an ongoing problem as work is restructured, corporations are downsized, technology improves and more service industries evolve.

**Unemployed people generally progress through four stages.**

These feelings are a very normal part of the adjustment to being unemployed. The degree of intensity and length of time one moves through these stages will vary from person to person.

## Publications on related topics

### JOB SEARCH

Qualities an Employer Looks for When Hiring  
(DETJ-8459-P)

Networking  
(DETJ-9455-P)

Where to Look for Job Opportunities  
(DETJ-9467-P)

### INTERVIEWING

Keys to Successful Interviewing  
(DETJ-6951-P)

Hidden Elements of Interviewing  
(DETJ-9484-P)

Informational Interviewing  
(DETJ-9407-P)

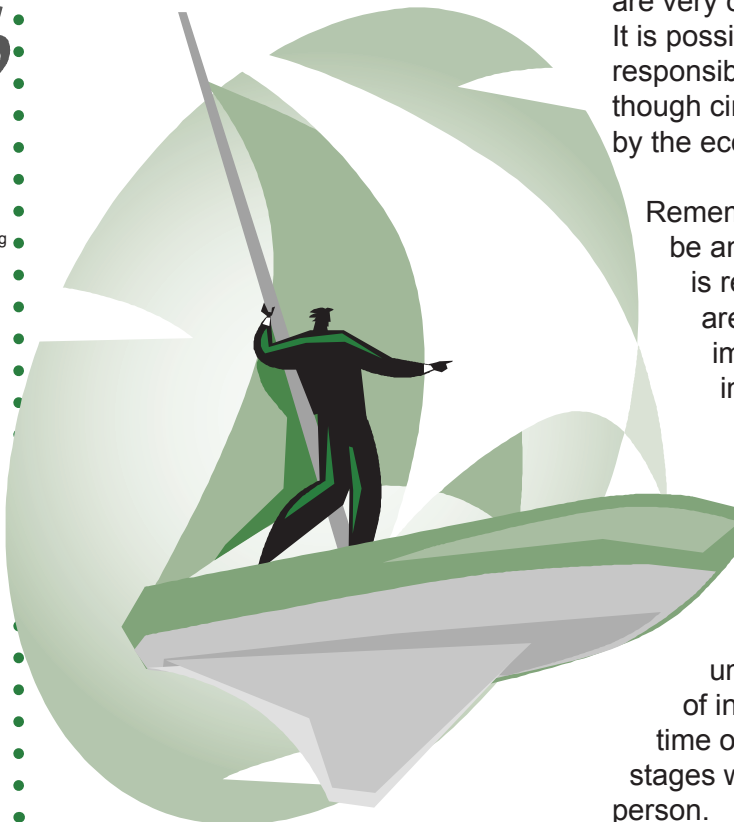
### RESUMES, APPLICATIONS

Personal Data Record  
(DETJ-4937-P)

Thoughts on Resumes  
(DETJ-4658-P)

Resume Writing—A Basic Guide  
(DETJ-9433-P)

DETJ-9413-P (R. 01/2010)





## Stage 1

### Denial / Isolation

Denial of a job loss may be expressed in a comment such as, "How could they have done this to me? I've done so much for the company."

People may come and go from their homes as though they are still working so no one will suspect that they are now unemployed. The workers who experience the most denial and isolation after a job loss are the ones who have had no warning and have spent years with the company.

During this stage, a person may not be very talkative about their feelings and emotions and may spend a lot of time alone.



## Stage 2

### Anger / Blame

Once the loss of a job sinks in, many people begin to feel anger. This anger/blame may be directed outward toward management, the organization, immediate supervisor, the union, foreign competition, foreign workers and possibly even neighbors, family or friends.

Anger/blame may also be directed inward, for example, "If only I had completed my degree ... or worked harder ..." Once started, the "if only I had" game becomes a vicious cycle that leads to nowhere.

## Stage 3

### Depression

Anger turned inward is often used by psychologists to define depression. Feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem, withdrawal, and overwhelming sadness are just a few of the symptoms that may last for weeks or months after the loss of a job.

## Stage 4

### Acceptance / Self-Analysis

Eventually, the unemployed person starts to focus on the present time and situation. The feeling of "let's get on with it" begins. During this stage, thinking becomes more objective and positive. The realization that there is no control over the past encourages thinking about new goals. One positive conclusion is, "Hey, I've got some important things to offer in today's labor market."