

# Your Personal Coach

By  
Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

Dear Kathleen,

**My brother was just laid off last week after almost 15 years with the same company. He says he's looking for a new job but hasn't done anything about it and can't seem to get off the couch. He says he doesn't want to talk about it. What can I do to help him? Thanks for being there.**

-- Arlene S.

Dear Arlene,

Losing a job is a blow to the ego as well as the pocketbook. Lots of people define their self-worth through their work and when their job is gone, they feel adrift, like they've lost a part of themselves, and they don't know what to do next.

Job loss can be emotionally traumatic; it ranks among the highest of stress-inducing life events.

During the past year, hundreds of thousands of jobs have disappeared in this recession. In fact, job loss for this past year is higher than it has been since World War II.

Despite the fact that your brother is not alone, it sounds as though he is hurting, and having a hard time both talking about how he feels, and getting his work life back on track.

Tell your brother that you love him. Tell him that you are there for him whenever he is ready to talk about his feelings. You might add that you understand that he may be feeling sad and angry, that these feelings are not uncommon.

When he is ready, you can offer practical help. Assistance with preparing his resume, or helping him navigate the necessary paperwork to maintain his health insurance benefits (COBRA) and apply for unemployment benefits (if he is eligible), can be excellent ways of helping him. Together you might brainstorm ideas about where he might look for another job. And another perspective—such as yours—can be very useful in “thinking outside the box;” you can help your brother explore a different career direction, work that he would truly love.

All of these practical activities can be positive ways that you can support him through this hard time. Remember that you cannot make your brother change. You can only give him love and encouragement, and listen with patience when he is ready to talk.

Your brother was laid off just last week. It may take him a bit more time to sort through his feelings and get motivated to move on with his life. But, if he is still on the couch and making no efforts to find a new job in another week or two, then you might suggest that he seek counseling to deal with his feelings and develop a plan for the future.

When your brother accepts that life is filled with change – often very painful changes – he can find the strength to move on. We cannot control many of the events of our lives, but we have full control over our reactions to those events.

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Kathleen Brehony  
1/10/02

The old adage that a window opens when one door closes is very often true. Don't we all know people who were in exactly your brother's situation at some time in their lives but who now have better jobs and lives because they courageously rose to the occasion?

The loss of a job offers opportunities to grow and change. Humanitarian Helen Keller gave us a brilliant insight when she wrote, "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved."

This can be a time for your brother to take stock of what he values in life, how he wants to live, and what would make him happy in his work life. He can learn that life's tragedies hold hidden opportunities. Your brother is very lucky to have such a loving and concerned sister.

*Send your personal coaching questions to [kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com](mailto:kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com), call 473-4004, or direction questions to the Outer Banks Sentinel, P.O. Box 546, Nags Head, NC 27949*

*Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D. is a personal coach, motivational speaker, clinical psychologist and author of "After the Darkest Hour" and other nonfiction books. She lives in Manteo. To learn more about personal coaching, visit her website at [www.fullpotentialliving.com](http://www.fullpotentialliving.com).*

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