

70 Tips for Tackling Long-Term Unemployment

Unemployment is tough. Long-term unemployment is torture. You wake up each morning, and day after day, forward applications for positions for which you feel your qualifications are a perfect fit. You stay positive and continue to tell yourself that if you put in the effort, you will reap your return. After all, it's only fair.

You've secured a number of interviews, and with your staunchly pressed interview attire, answer questions clearly and succinctly, prepared to answer any question regarding your previous employer and why you no longer work at that company.

Yet nothing has panned out. No interviewer has called you back, leaving you to wonder about what you did wrong. "It's because I've been out of work so long," you begin to think. But you will never know the reason.

Long-term unemployment sets in at about the six-month mark, creating a significant gap in employment for an individual, making it more difficult for an individual to secure work.

2.2 million Americans are considered unemployed long-term (27 weeks or more), so the good in the bad is that you are not alone.

So how do you get over this hump? How do you find the grit within to really overcome this difficult period in your life? How do you get back to work? While we cannot offer one cure-all answer, we can provide tips to assist you in making the long-awaited transition from long-term unemployed to gainful employee.

The tips are organized into sections, so feel free to review this white paper out of order in order to find the information that best suits your needs.

Tips for Staying Sane

Long-term unemployment can have a significant impact on a person's well-being. Whether it directly impacts an individual's standard of living or quality of life, long-term unemployment can take a toll on an individual's emotional well-being. Use these tips to "stay sane" during this difficult stretch in your employment life.

1. Assess the situation. Determine whether you have been unemployed for six months or more. If so, you are considered unemployed long-term.
2. Accept that you are unemployed long-term. Doing so will prevent additional stress during your job search.
3. Accept that as an individual who is unemployed long-term, you will require a different approach to your job search.
4. Join a support group for the unemployed. Learn about others' experiences with unemployment and how they cope.

5. Don't join a support group for the unemployed. Don't learn about others' experiences with unemployment if you feel your experience is difficult enough.
6. Develop a budget. You most likely don't have the same income that you had while employed, so develop a plan prioritizing weekly expenses.
7. If possible, leave a few extra dollars for unexpected necessary expenses. You might want to invest in high-quality resume paper for an interview that you land.
8. Keep your living space clean. Your mind is already cluttered with the details of your job search, and will thank you for it.
9. Get out of the house. Go to a friend's house, a park, or whatever your definition of "out" is. Give yourself a break and get away from everything for a moment.
10. Check out Meetup.com. These groups, which meet regularly (once a week or month) are usually free and are a great way to get connected to people.

Tips for Staying Positive

1. Seek out the employed. Surround yourself with people who are where you want to be to envision yourself in the same place.
2. Read maxims and affirmations. Any other time they might seem cheesy, but during your spell of unemployment, maybe they will be inspiring.
3. Avoid the news. Bad things happen to good people, like you. Avoid the negativity of the news to stay focused during your renewed job search.
4. File for unemployment if you haven't already. You have paid taxes to be supported during this time of need.
5. Don't feel guilty. Long-term unemployment is not something unique to only you—over 2.2 million people are dealing with its effects.
6. Read. Whether you like fiction or non-fiction, read that book you've been wanted to read. *Principia Mathematica*, anyone?
7. Exercise. It releases endorphins which will improve your mood.
8. React. If you're sad, be sad. If you're indifferent, be indifferent. Deal with your feelings instead of ignoring them.
9. Talk to friends or family members. Share your experiences with whoever is closest to you and you feel won't judge your experiences.

10. Write down your accomplishments. Keep a list of your professional high points to stay motivated.

Tips for Your Cover Letter and Resume

Now that we've addressed the emotional impact of being unemployed long-term, let's get to work. Your resume will show a significant gap in employment, but this doesn't have to be a deal breaker.

1. Don't fear the gap. Instead of being afraid of employers seeing the period of time you were unemployed, prepare yourself to explain how you have instead filled the time.
2. Give results. Instead of listing job duties, list how your actions resulted in more sales, higher productivity, or a better work environment.
3. Customize your resume. Tailor your resume to fit each position for which you are applying.
4. Customize your cover letter. Make sure that you address past experience that specifically fits the job description of the new position you are seeking.
5. Substitute. If you don't have the exact experience required, focus on the skill set that was developed to be able to perform the job duties.
6. Remove months from your resume. Instead of writing September 2012-April 2013, write 2012-2013 to make up for short-term employment.
7. Proofread. Review your cover letter and resume for spelling errors and awkward phrases. Let them sit for a day, and then review them again.
8. Use high-quality resume paper. They are an inexpensive way (10 to 15 cents per page at Kinko's) to stand out and make a strong first impression.
9. Note non-traditional experience such as working with multi-cultural groups, various ages, and social groups. Many companies aim to close generation gaps among employees and encourage individuals of varying backgrounds to apply for positions.
10. Send your resume to all of your contacts. Share with others that you're looking for work.