Toward Authenticity or Defeat: The Jolting Effect of Layoff

de Janasz, Suzanne C; Kenworthy, Amy L

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RESEARCH BACKGROUND
The last decade has brought with it unprecedented change—not all of it good. The recent economic downturn has damaged organizations, communities, industries, nations, and individuals. Given the sometimes harsh reality facing many in today’s volatile economy, we have looked at the impact that being made redundant has on individuals. Does it irrevocably damage their self-esteem? What does it mean for their future careers? And can being laid off actually improve individuals’ overall health and well-being?

This last point may sound counter-intuitive, but do not underestimate the power of change. It is easy to think of losing a job as overwhelmingly negative, but our research indicates that the disruptive effect—the “jolt” of job loss can also be a catalyst for positive change. This type of jolt has the potential to shake people out of inertia, forcing them to discard the old and focus attention on the new.

FOUR KEY THEMES
Lifestyle Quality:
For 50% of our respondents, there was a clear focus on the next job providing them with flexibility and the ability to spend quality time with family & friends. 42% focused on a desire to reduce the amount of work that they were previously doing as a component of their job.

Meaningful Work:
92% defined their job search as having at least one of the key criteria related to finding meaningful work. 82% of those respondents literally used the words meaningful work or meaningful opportunities in their comments.

Job Security and Happiness:
33% expressed a desire for happiness related to a new job. 50% of our respondents indicated their inextricable desire to feel stability and security. For 33%, this search for stability was so important that they were willing to trade off level of position and associated responsibility for a job with security & stability.

Self-doubt and Cynicism:
50% of the respondents, the jolt of their respective layoffs sparked two types of negative reactions: 42% self-doubt 33% general cynicism about organizations and their future.

CNN Article (excerpt)
Lose your job, find yourself:
Why redundancy might not be so bad
By Tim Hume, for CNN
February 28, 2012

(CNN) -- There’s no question that losing your job can be a jolting experience, as anyone who has had the misfortune of being laid off in recent years can attest. But what if that jolt could be a positive experience?

That’s the suggestion to come out of recent research which looked into the experiences of laid-off mid-to senior-level managers in the United States and Australia.