



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE OF THE PACIFIC, LLC

When a Co-Worker is Laid Off or Furloughed

In some ways you and your coworkers are like a family. You work together and may also share breaks, meals and social events. When a coworker is laid off or furloughed, you may feel sad, or you may grieve as if there were a death, divorce or falling out in "the family." Let's look at some of the other reactions you and others in your office may feel when there's a layoff or furlough.

"It's Not Fair!"

When an officemate is laid off or furloughed, it's natural to take the coworker's side in an imagined "dispute" with the company. You may feel that management unfairly singled out this person or has an ax to grind. Sometimes these feelings result in poor work performance by "the survivors."

It's hard to know all the reasons for an employee's dismissal or why they were chosen for a furlough. Chances are that it was a difficult decision for everyone involved. No matter what the reasons for the layoff or furlough, you are only going to hurt yourself by letting it affect your work. If, after looking at your performance for some weeks after the decision, you can honestly say you are still not performing up to par, consider talking the situation over with your supervisor.

"Why Am I Feeling Guilty?"

As a survivor you may feel that you somehow benefited from your coworker's layoff or furlough. After all, you are still working. You may even have felt a moment of relief when the other person was laid off or furloughed instead of you. Of course, if you look closely at the situation, it's easy to see that you are not responsible for the other person's predicament.

Talk over your guilt feelings with an outside friend. When you don't recognize or deal with such feelings, they can cause symptoms of stress or depression.

"What If I'm Next?"

Fear is another reaction to a coworker's layoff or furlough. You naturally feel less secure when you realize that you could be next. In times of economic uncertainty, when future layoffs and furloughs may be coming, the stress can be unbearable. If after a layoff or furlough you experience symptoms of stress (fatigue, insomnia, appetite changes, poor concentration) get some help. Talk to an EAP counselor, coworker, pastor or trusted friend. Learn some stress reduction techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or exercise.

Face Your Feelings

The key to dealing with a painful layoff or furlough is the same as for any traumatic change or loss: face your reaction honestly, whether it's resentment, anger, guilt or fear, so you can begin the process of acceptance and develop inner peace.

Your EAP is here to help you and your covered family members. Call us to arrange free and confidential services, including: counseling (telephonic and video consultation is available), legal and financial consultation, eldercare and healthcare navigations assistance.

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