TELLING FAMILY AND FRIENDS YOU’VE BEEN LAID OFF

Talking about lay offs can be tough for everyone involved. No company wants to have to cut jobs and tell employees they’re being laid off. When you’re the person who has lost a job, telling family and friends about it can be difficult. But it’s a conversation you have to have, especially with your immediate family or partner. This affects them, too, and they need to hear about it from you. Here are some suggestions for getting through what you think might be a painful process.

FIRST, HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOURSELF.

How did you feel when you were first told about being laid off? Were you shocked? Was it hard to believe? Did you feel angry or sad? These are common emotions that many people experience following any loss. It is natural and appropriate to want to share your feelings with those who are closest to you as soon as possible. You may be worried about how to break the news to them. Be aware of your reactions and understand that when you tell your spouse and family they are likely to have initial reactions similar to yours.

TELLING YOUR SPOUSE OR PARTNER

As difficult as it may be, you will want to talk openly and honestly about what’s happening and what you know about the situation. Your spouse will probably have many of the same questions as you did, such as why you were laid off, whether there’s a chance you’ll be rehired, what kind of severance package you received and how the lay off affects your medical and life insurance coverage or your retirement plan. He or she may also want to know whether you will receive help from the company in looking for another job. (You probably received a packet from your company that covers this information or advises you where to go to get these questions answered.)

The next question you will be asking each other is, “What do we do now?” By working together to come up with a plan, you will strengthen your family and your relationships with each other. You may need to rework your budget, discuss how you will begin your job search, whether either of you will look for part-time work and, most of all, make time to listen to each other’s concerns and support each other through this time of change. You may want to postpone any major decisions until this situation has been resolved.

If there are children in your family, you will also want to agree on how you will tell them.

TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN IN TERMS THEY UNDERSTAND.

Don’t try to hide the news from them, but also don’t scare them with more than they are able to understand. Refrain from having “grownup discussions” in front of small children; this might instill unnecessary fear.

While preschoolers may only need to know that mommy or daddy won’t be going to work for awhile and will be looking for a new job, a school age child will need more information. You might let an 8- or 9-year-old know that the company you worked for has had to cut back and mommy’s or daddy’s job was cut. Reassure them that they will be doing many things as usual, such as a spending time with friends and family. At the same time, let them know you’ll tell them if changes are necessary. Don’t tell children nothing has changed if you know belt-tightening is called for. Be especially careful not to make promises you may not be able to keep. By soliciting their ideas and help, they will know that they are an important part of the family. Even helping in small ways will make them feel good.

MAKE TELLING RELATIVES AND FRIENDS A PART OF YOUR PLAN TO START A NEW.

Breaking the news to relatives and friends is an opportunity to jumpstart your search for a new job. Lay out the circumstances of the layoff briefly and in terms you feel comfortable sharing. Leave out details you want to keep private; don’t make up a better-sounding scenario. Simply saying, “I’m leaving my job and looking for new opportunities,” just about covers it if that’s all you’re willing to say. Be specific about the kinds of jobs you’d consider, and let them know that job-hunting suggestions and tips about openings they’re aware of will be appreciated. These are people who know you and will be motivated to help.

The information sharing doesn’t end once you’ve told everyone you think should know. Keep the lines of communications open. A spouse or partner who’s kept up-to-date can help make plans for finances and other issues. Children whose questions are welcomed and answered feel more secure. Relatives and friends who get responses to suggestions and tips – even the ones that don’t work out – are more likely to keep a look out for the job that suits you.

Finally, keep that conversation with yourself going. How are you handling things? What’s your outlook – are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future? Are emotional struggles interfering with your ability to meet the challenges you face? If you feel you need help now or may need help in the future, find out what resources are available to you.

This article is for informational and self-help purposes only. It should not be treated as a substitute for financial, medical, psychiatric, psychological or behavioral healthcare advice, or as a substitute for consultation with a qualified professional.