

The  
Co[me]back

*Price Pritchett, Ph.D.*

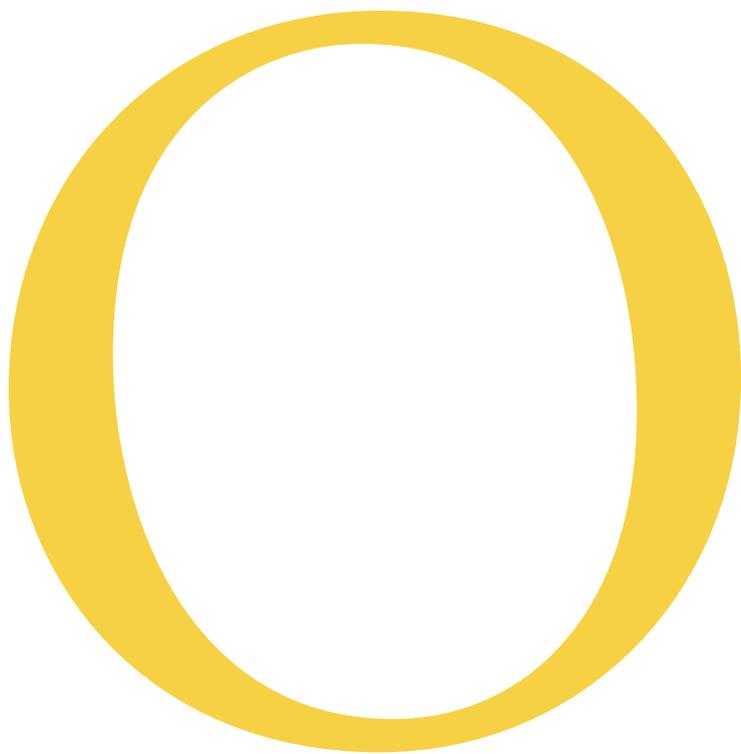
“By 42, the average American  
will change jobs

11 (X)  
*times.*”

—The Wall Street Journal,  
December, 2008

*So* . . . the job is over.

Gone.



Choosing to “let go” is the next step in the unfolding of your career. Disconnecting from what’s going away is your first work, the crucial move needed to position yourself for something new.

You might struggle against what is happening, curse the situation, or play the victim and sink into despair. All understandable.

But letting go positions you for renewal. The wisdom lies in recognizing that letting go is not giving up . . . not failure or defeat. It’s releasing yourself from *then*, using *now* to the fullest extent, and shaping what comes *next* into a future perhaps as good or even better.



*That’s where you must begin: With the ending.*

Some 150 years ago Charles Darwin said:

“It is not the strongest  
of the species that survives,  
*nor the*  
most intelligent,  
*but the one most responsive to*  
*change.”*

**Here's the good news.**

# YOU

- You are gifted with a great capacity for change.
- You are the most powerful person in your life.
- You are the solution to your future.

The secrets to success in this ever-changing world lie within—  
in your ideas and imagination...your energy and attitudes  
...your willingness to explore and take personal responsibility for your future.

What just happened to your career wasn't your decision.  
But you get to choose what happens next.

*past* [present] *future*

“The past can help explain the present,  
*but it* should never be  
an *excuse* for the future.”

—Wally Armstrong & Ken Blanchard,  
*The Mulligan*

Human beings have a very predictable reaction to change:

**The first scan is for danger.**

This is a natural impulse—a survival instinct—and ordinarily it should work to your advantage.

Problem is, sometimes people overreact. And sometimes they seem paralyzed by the situation. You can't rely on "just doing what comes naturally," because those impulses may not work for you at all.

If you think of job loss as a career crisis point, then it makes sense to follow the rules for survival in crisis situations. In *Deep Survival*, author Laurence Gonzales gives these five guidelines for dealing with serious adversity:

**1**  
**Face reality.** Get in harmony with what's happening, and act with the expectation of success. Have faith that things will turn out to your advantage. Keep hope alive!

**2**  
**Be calm, don't panic.** Control your emotional reactions so they don't sabotage your ability to reason.

**3**  
**Get organized.** Set up routines—small, manageable tasks—and institute personal discipline. Exert control where you can. Don't freeze up or disengage.

**4**  
**List three constructive** things you can do, then pick one and do it. Then another.

**5**  
**Commit yourself** totally to making the best of the situation. Be the person that you can most admire in this circumstance. Prove who you are.



These survival steps work across a wide range of difficult and dangerous circumstances. Follow them. They're perfect for helping you manage the initial trauma of losing your job.



“People are always telling you that  
change is a good thing.

But all they’re really saying is that  
something you didn’t want to happen

● ● ● *has happened.*”

—Meg Ryan  
(as Kathleen Kelly in *You’ve Got Mail*)

Much has been written about the emotions people experience when they suffer a significant loss.

It's helpful to know the common reactions and realize that they tend to follow a predictable pattern. If you're aware of the normal human responses, that helps you understand and deal more effectively with your own personal feelings.

Losing a job can trigger a sequence of emotions that resembles the stages of grief we go through when someone close to us dies. It's a phased reaction—a mourning process—that we cycle through in dealing with the loss.

### **Stage 1: Shock and Numbness**

The emotional hit in Stage 1 stuns the person, even if the job loss was somewhat expected. This initial numbness may be accompanied by a sense of confusion, disbelief, or difficulty in processing information about the situation. Often the person withdraws from others and functions in a rather mechanical manner.

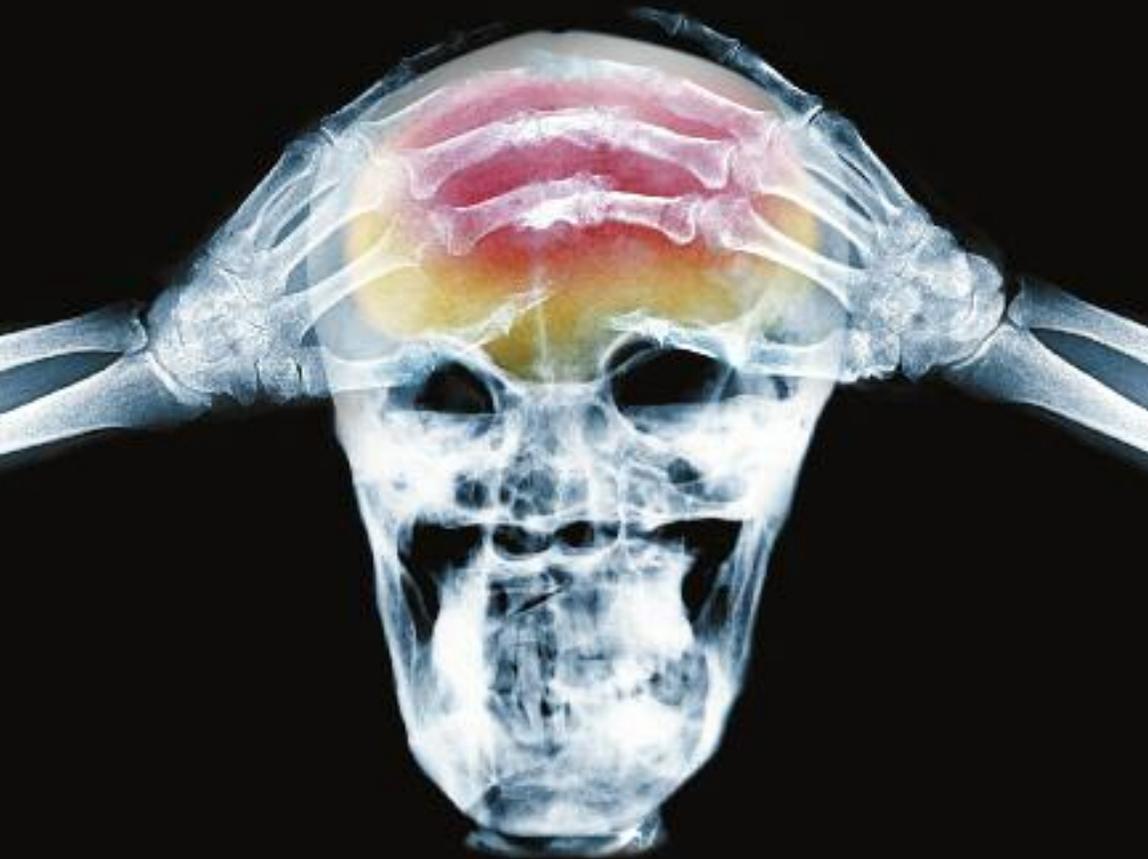
### **Stage 2: Disorganization and Emotionality**

Intense feelings typically surface in Stage 2 and range across a wide spectrum of emotions: anger, sadness, resentment, guilt, fear, powerlessness, shame, etc. Painful feelings of loss hijack the person's consciousness. This troubled mental and emotional state interferes with one's ability to concentrate, plan, or mobilize to deal effectively with the situation.

### **Stage 3: Reorganization**

Here the person comes to grips with the loss and begins to get better traction in life. A sense of acceptance replaces most of the negative emotionality. Thoughts focus more on the future and its possibilities. In Stage 3 the person becomes reconciled to the changes and proceeds with the needed personal adjustments.





*This grieving process is not only normal, but also has its own healing power. It's the psychological pathway one follows in recovering from the jarring experience of losing a job.*

*Naturally, people move through these stages in different ways and at different speeds. There may be relapses. Some people get stuck. It helps to use this three-step process as a map to track your progress and keep yourself moving in the right direction. The more you can maintain a positive mindset and engage in constructive efforts, the better you will navigate through the three stages.*



“Doing your best at this moment puts you  
in the best place for the next moment.”

—Oprah Winfrey

The emotional turmoil, sense of loss, and new problems caused by job loss represent added stresses in your life. That's bad enough. But you also can make the mistake of handling yourself in ways that make matters still worse.

**It's very important that you do yourself no further harm.**

Lots of things you'd like to change are beyond your reach. You can't control them. But you're the boss of your behavior, the person in charge of how you react to losing your job.

The idea is to "control the controllables."

With that thought in mind, consider what's going on in your life these days in the broader sense.

You undoubtedly have a variety of other problems, issues, and life adjustments besides job loss that add to your stress load. You need to pay attention to the big picture, because stress tends to feed on itself. Problems in one area of your life often cause trouble in another. In particular, extreme stress is damaging to your health. It also interferes with your personal effectiveness, making it more difficult to get repositioned in a new job.

Give thought to things you could do to reduce your current level of stress during this career transition.