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TURNING LAYOFFS INTO OPPORTUNITIES: TIPS TO TAKE YOU FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING



If you are someone who embraces change and new challenges—even when unexpected—[finding yourself out of a job](#) [<https://safetynet.com/blog/the-pre-layoff-checklist-before-laid-off/>] may bring you more inspiration than paralysis. After all, what feels like crisis in the moment merely looks like another life change once you do (and you will!) land your next job.

For others, however, [maintaining good mental and physical habits](#) [<https://hbr.org/2015/07/how-to-bounce-back-after-getting-laid-off>] is an essential first step to cultivating optimism in the face of anxiety and grief. To avoid spiraling into the abyss of your couch, consider [setting a timer](#) [<https://www.roberthalf.com/creativegroup/blog/10-ways-i-turned-a-layoff-into-a-career-building-opportunity>] on how long you will give yourself to process the shock. Maybe it's 48 hours, maybe until the end of the week, but commit to that time period. When it's over, get up and get going, and use these layoff tips to turn your circumstances into an opportunity.

Layoff Tip #1: Jump and the net will appear

The good news is that layoffs really do have the potential to nudge you [toward a greater self-awareness and a more fulfilling career](#) [<https://www.roberthalf.com/creativegroup/blog/10-ways-i-turned-a-layoff-into-a-career-building-opportunity>].

Think about what you have wanted to achieve and haven't gotten around to. Allow yourself to dream big about your next steps. Then take advantage of the freedom you have been given (okay, that has been foisted upon you) and pursue some of the things—no matter how illogical or even crazy they might seem—that you've been dreaming about doing for all those years.

Layoff Tip #2: Learn what you want



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Programs like [VolunteerMatch](https://www.volunteermatch.org/) [<https://www.volunteermatch.org/>], and [Points of Light](http://www.pointsoflight.org/) [<http://www.pointsoflight.org/>], help you narrow your options by interest and region. For internships, start with [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) [<https://www.indeed.com>] or [Glassdoor](https://www.glassdoor.com/index.htm) [<https://www.glassdoor.com/index.htm>].

But remember: Searching for new opportunities requires you pursue something that genuinely interests you, no matter how far afield from your traditional professional trajectory it may be. If it's hard to take an illogical step, keep in mind you'll be far more likely to stay engaged while working for free if you are learning and doing things that deeply interest you. And you'll have something super interesting to talk about when confronted with the dreaded "So what do you do?" cocktail-party question.

Pursuing education, too, doesn't have to mean taking a traditional route by earning, say, a business degree or administrative certification. Consider tackling a software program you've wanted to learn or look into personal development classes, even if they scream "hobby" more than "hire."

If you're an online learner, explore [Udemy](https://www.udemy.com) [<https://www.udemy.com>] and [Lynda](https://www.lynda.com) [<https://www.lynda.com>]. Also look into your university's extension programs and the local community college. You may even [qualify for financial aid](https://blog.mint.com/how-to/unemployment-financial-aid-08122010/) [<https://blog.mint.com/how-to/unemployment-financial-aid-08122010/>].

Layoff Tip #3: Get into the gig

Now might be just the time for you to toss your hat into [the gig economy](https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2016/article/what-is-the-gig-economy.htm) [<https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2016/article/what-is-the-gig-economy.htm>]. (generally defined as freelance, on-demand type work). Lest you think freelance jobs are reserved for creative types like graphic designers and writers, know that even some general contractors fit into this classification.

Particularly if you are drawn to flexibility, autonomy and variety in your work, check in with your inner pet sitter, software developer, housepainter, delivery driver or [online seller](https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2013/spring/yawhat.pdf) [<https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2013/spring/yawhat.pdf>] to see what you might have to offer.

In the short run, you'll gain new skills and even a side salary. In the long run? You may just find yourself a business owner.

Layoff Tip #4: Think quantum

Remind yourself that one serious advantage to being laid off is the potential ["jump-in-salary" and other perks](https://www.monster.ca/career-advice/article/layoff-can-mean-salary-increase-canada) [<https://www.monster.ca/career-advice/article/layoff-can-mean-salary-increase-canada>] that your old job would not have provided. After all, as long as you remained at the same company, you most likely would have received only incremental bumps in your salary, and your benefits would likely have stagnated or even declined.

When you do land your next job offer, boldly negotiate what you know you are worth (particularly if you've gained new skills in the interim). Ask for the salary your experience deserves. Think ahead about additional bargaining chips like flex time, health benefits, bonuses and vacation time that can seriously upgrade your circumstances.

Layoff Tip #5: Face the fear

One of the greatest benefits of living through job loss is the self-confidence you will gain once all is said and done. You'll know how it feels to lose your job. You'll know you can survive it. At best, you have seen yourself thrive in it.

Congratulations, the world just got easier.

JUNE 16, 2017 | BY ROSHNI CHOWDHRY

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