

Resources are available to cope with change on the job

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Recent layoffs, reorganizations and other changes at Hanford may have caused increased worry for many Hanford employees. You may have been laid off or you may worry about being laid off in the future. As a manager or coworker, it may have been stressful to watch an employee lose a job.

People who do not cope well with job loss believe, "I am what I do." They feel pessimistic and hopeless, believing they will not find another job or that things will be worse in any other job they might find. They do not have many outside interests and activities. Furthermore, they avoid social situations or conversations with family. These people tend to feel bored, do not know what to do with their time, and feel alone in their struggle to cope with being laid off.

People who survive layoffs often feel insecure that they, too, will be laid off soon. It is also common to feel guilty that they were not laid off, angry about the company decisions that were made or even depressed about the changes that occurred. Many people harbor worries about being laid off but do not want to "burden" family members with their concerns.

There are a number of things you can do to cope with either being laid off or fearing you will be laid off in the future. First of all, do not forget to take care of yourself. Make sure you take a lunch break, eat nutritious meals, exercise and get enough sleep. Feelings of stress can multiply when you neglect yourself. Your performance also suffers, which can add to your level of stress.

It is also very important to stay connected with family, friends, co-workers and other supportive people in your life. Speaking with family, for instance, may allow you to gain an accurate understanding of your true financial situation and whether the family can help cut expenses if needed. Co-workers may be able to provide constructive criticism as well as support.

Family, friends and co-workers may be unable to give you support or objective advice. Professional counseling may be an important resource. Hanford Environmental Health Foundation Behavioral Health Services provides confidential, personal counseling for you or your family members. We have helped Hanford workers cope with job loss; anxiety about job stability; and feelings of anger, guilt and sadness related to job changes.

We can also help workers identify their interests through career testing and meet their potential through personally tailored advice on how to reach personal and professional goals.

Eligible Hanford employees may have up to eight free sessions. Services are provided by Dan Lowe, Ph.D., Shaanti Lawrence, Psy.D., and Kathy King, Academy of Certified Social Workers. Call 376-4418 for eligibility for services and more information. ■