

	Stages of Unemployment			
	Stage 1: Shock, Relief, and Relaxation	Stage 2: Concerted Effort	Stage 3: Vacillation, Self-doubt, and Anger	Stage 4: Resignation and Withdrawal
Duration	1-2 months	Approx. 3 months	Approx. 1-2 months	Indefinite duration
Psychological processes	1. Initial shock; reduction in stress following period of anticipation and uncertainty	1. Stress depends on financial security and social support; those in midcareer most affected	1. Frustration and questioning of ability to find a job	1. Resignation to being in a jobless state.
	2. Low need to return to work to attain security	2. High motivation to work, including a) high initiative, b) high occupational aspirations	2. Lower motivation to work, including a) lower initiative, b) low occupational aspirations, c) occupational identity problems.	2. Work inhibition accompanied by a) low initiative, b) low occupational aspirations, c) occupational rigidity, d) professional obsolescence.
	3. Positive mental state in terms of a) self-esteem, b) life satisfaction, c) hopefulness, d) low anomie.	3. Mental state improved in terms of a) low anxiety and b) personal control.	3. Some hope remains.	3. Mental state improves in terms of reduced feelings of a) anxiety, b) desperation, c) being burdened with responsibility.
	4. Some negative reactions in terms of a) resentment of employer and b) anxiety.	4. Mental state begins to deteriorate in terms of a) life dissatisfaction, and b) being burdened w/ responsibility.	4. Mental state deteriorates in terms of a) high anxiety and b) extreme anger.	4. Mental state deteriorates in terms of a) low motivation, b) low self-esteem, c) loss of control, d) helplessness, and e) hopelessness.
Possible behavioral and physical outcomes	1. Behaves as if on vacation.	1. Concentrates almost totally on finding work.	1. Job search becomes erratic; attempts to change career or occupation.	1. Avoidance of searching for a job.
	2. Normal social relationships; lack of openness about job loss.	2. Receives social support.	2. Conflicts with family and friends.	2. Social relations limited to a few close relatives and friends with activities centered at home.
	3. Hostility against former employer.	3. Attempts to be in control.	3. Psychosomatic disorders (physical symptoms that have no physiological basis) and suicide proneness begin.	3. Increase in psychosomatic disorders and suicide proneness.

Source: Adapted from Kaufman, 1982, *Professionals in search of work: Coping with the stress of job loss and underemployment*. Pp. 118-119.

The loss of a job has multiple psychological and behavioral consequences, and these seem to occur in stages. Each stage tends to be associated with different cognitive, emotional and behavioral processes.

There are at least 5 stages of involuntary unemployment. The first is 'anticipatory job loss.' Employees may have a sense that they will lose their job even before a layoff occurs. The next four stages of unemployment are shock, relief and relaxation; concerted effort; vacillation, self-doubt and anger; and resignation and withdrawal.

During the first stage, the individual initially feels some shock, followed by a reduction of anxiety related to the uncertainty and anticipation that might have preceded their job loss. People are fairly optimistic at this point. Stage 2, concerted effort, occurs after 1-2 months and generally lasts for approx. 3 months. During this stage, energy is focused on finding a job. If a job is not found, the person's mental state begins to decline. After approx. 5 months of unemployment, people enter Stage 3 which lasts for 1 and ½ months. Although there is still some hope for finding a job, people have lower motivation to work and to look for work, and their mental state continues to decline. Finally, those who remain unemployed enter Stage 4, resignation and withdrawal. People become resigned to being out of work and the motivation to look continues to decrease, as does self-esteem.

An individual's career stage is likely to influence the way the person experiences involuntary job loss. Those at the early and late stages tend to have the least severe reactions to job loss. Those at the early stages typically have fewer family and financial obligations and can more easily move into jobs at entry-level positions which are usually more abundant. Those at late career stages also have fewer family and financial responsibilities (children grown up, house paid off, etc.). However, individuals during their middle career years (30s and 40s) are hit hardest by the loss of a job. They are likely raising a family, saving for college, and paying for homes.

The Brighter Side

On the positive side, layoffs may lead to seasoning or experience necessary to become a leader. The person is less likely to have a naïve view of the world and of companies in general. They may be more hardworking, motivated, politically astute, and sensitive in interpersonal relationships after finding another job. Having been laid off may force the person to think deeply about his or her career and/or life. This may stimulate the re-evaluation of values and goals. It may also stimulate an individual's sense of personal responsibility. In fact, the trauma of being laid off may provide the shock that opens the person up to other perspectives. The time away from work can provide time for solitude and reflection. At this time, some may be able to crystallize goals and a vision for the future. Surviving this experience may instill the sense of personal mastery and confidence that is necessary for future leadership positions.

Source: Neal Schmitt, 1993. Personnel Selection in Organizations. Josey-Bass.