Involve Your Family in Your Job Search

Being unemployed and looking for work not only affects you, it affects everyone in your family. It is critical that you involve all of your family in your job search. Your family is extremely interested in your success, so why not let them help you?

The team strategy

Assemble a team that understands and supports your efforts. This strategy can multiply your emotional strength, increase your tenacity and give you the confidence and discipline needed to keep job hunting at full power.

It's all right to have non-family team members, such as employment counselors, close friends and others who are also job hunting, but recruit *family first*.

Why team strategy is good for the family and for you:

- A team can multiply your efforts and increase your effectiveness.
- Job hunting is stressful and puts pressure on family relationships. *Playing on the same team strengthens family bonds and unites the family.*
- Everyone in the family has the chance to participate and contribute what they can, including children.
- Every member of the team plays their own tactical position, to achieve a common goal. The team is most effective when players use their unique strengths and choose the position that fits them best.
- There's a good chance that you'll find a new job faster with the family on your side.

How to assemble the team

- Read both pages of this * °Ł˛ˇ, then share it with your family. Give everyone a chance to read it.

- Ask each person to review the List of Roles needed for an effective job-hunting team. Discuss the strategy and ask the family to choose roles that they can comfortably play .
- A person may choose more than one role.
- You and the role-player both need to agree that this is a good position for the person to play, and one in which they will be effective.
- Most families will not be able to fill all the roles. For instance, it may turn out that everyone in your family is most comfortable in the cheerleading role. You could end up with four or five cheerleaders. That's all right; you'll have lots of positive emotional support. The idea is to have your family be as involved as they can be. The team will be more effective if you can cover all the tactical positions. Once your family members have chosen roles that suit them best, fill in the gaps with extended family, former colleagues, trusted friends and anyone else you'd like to have on your team.
- Have each person commit to a role; e.g., *I will be your cheerleader*.

Asking the team for help

When you need help from team members, it's up to you to let them know. Once the roles have been established, it's easy to ask for help.

- For instance, let's say you're feeling sad and tired after a day of rejections. Tell your cheerleaders about the efforts you've put forth and ask for their honest appreciation.
- Your cheerleaders won't try to console you, or comfort you, but will tell you how impressed they are with what you've done and why they're proud of you.

List of roles

☐ **The Cheerleader**:
Someone who applauds your efforts, no matter what the results might be.
When you tell cheerleaders what you've been doing, they will say positive things such as, *I'm impressed. That must have taken a lot of courage*. Their role is to encourage you and tell you why you're wonderful.

☐ **The Idea Person**:
Someone who has the creativity and experience to suggest new and better ways of doing things when you think you've done all you can to find a job.

☐ **The Listener**:
- A sympathetic individual who consoles and comforts you when you're wallowing in self-pity.
- Someone who doesn't feel threatened when you express your frustration, vent anger and blow off steam.

☐ **The Wise One**:

- Someone who has more life-experience than you.
- Someone with wisdom and discernment to help you make better choices.
- Someone good at putting things in perspective and reminding you of the big picture.

☐ **The Duty Officer**:
- Sympathizes with your goals, but can be stern with you when you don't complete tasks.
- Someone who is dependable and cares enough about you to call you regularly, once a week, whether you call them or not.
- Someone who receives your progress report for the past week and your plans for the coming week.

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Taking telephone messages

Sooner or later, a potential employer will call your home to invite you to an interview. Because you've been telling everyone you know that you're job hunting, a call could come from anyone, at any time of the day. *Prepare the family to expect these calls and train them to answer these calls*:

- Keep a pen and notepad beside the phone at all times.
- Decide in advance who will answer the phone in your absence.
- Keep a written telephone script next to the phone. Adapt the example that's included below to your situation.

Sample telephone script to be used by family members

1. When you answer the phone say, "Hello, this is the (family's last name) residence."
2. If the caller asks for the job seeker and that person is not home, reply, "I'm sorry. Mr./Mrs./Miss (last name) isn't available at this time, but I'd be happy to take a message for him (her). If you give me your name and number, I will ask him (her) to call you back. When would be a convenient time for him/her to call you?"
3. Write down the information the caller gives you. Use the pad of paper that is next to the phone. Repeat the name and phone number to the caller to make sure you've written the information accurately.
4. End the call by saying, "Thank you."

How to create a positive family environment

- *Share your successes with the family*, as well as your problems. Although you don't yet have the job you want, each day you experience small triumphs. Tell your family about those successes, no matter how trivial they may seem.
- *Listen with an open mind* to your family's worries and concerns.
- *Schedule family time*: Stay in touch with each person in the family by scheduling special one-on-one time with each child and with your spouse. Being unemployed can lull you into a false sense of being available all the time. Building structured time together gives you a chance to focus on the relationship and to enjoy a sense of pleasant anticipation.

A spouse's role

When *one* partner is unemployed, both partners in a marriage feel the stress. It's a time of anxiety. The best relationships can become strained. Review the contents of this **Guide** together. Besides working together as a job-hunting team, spouses can keep channels of communication open by discussing the topics listed below:

☐ **Networking**
- Your spouse can be your prime networking partner, telling others about you and your skills and asking them if they know of job opportunities that would suit you.
- Your spouse will be more effective if you can tell them the kind of job you're looking for. Be as detailed as you can.
- Spouses may hear of job openings at their workplace that aren't yet advertised or posted by the employer. They can watch bulletin boards at work for help-wanted ads.
- Spouses can handle phone calls, take messages and help write letters to potential employers.

☐ **Financial**
- Plan a budget together.
- Do you have joint savings that you can draw on if the need arises?
- If your spouse is employed, how long will their earnings provide the family with a financial buffer?
- Health care coverage: If your spouse is employed, can you and other family members be added to his or her policy?

☐ **Planning the future**
- What are your family goals for the next 6 months, 1 year, 5 years? Discuss life goals, career goals, personal goals.
- Prioritize goals.
- How will you meet the goals that are most important to you?
- What will each of you have to give up until you find a new job?

Don't forget the children

What you can do to help your children cope.

Often we forget that children are affected by the unemployment of a parent. Like you, they are apprehensive and feel stress, sad or worry. *As the parent, you need to take a break* and have some family fun. *Make a list of things you can do together as a family*. You don't have to spend money to have a good time. Here are some ideas to get you started:

✓ Play card games or a board game that your children like.
✓ Take an active role in your children's school activities. Attend their sporting activities. Take them to the movies or sporting events.
✓ Play catch in the backyard or go for a nature walk in the woods.
✓ Physical activities such as running, walking and sports are especially good for getting rid of family stress.

Remember that you're not alone.

- Remind your children that they can still count on you to be there for them. Even though you are unemployed, that hasn't changed.
- Involve your children in your job search. Have them prepare your résumé for mailings. Train them to answer the telephone when you are out of the home.

Internet resources

www.indeed.com/forum/gen/Career-Advice/Unemployed-being-looked-down-upon/t497147-- Critical relatives.
www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/job-loss-and-unemployment-stress.htm-- Stay positive and connected.
www.urban.org/urban-wire/lose-your-job-lose-your-family-how-unemployment-affects-family-stability-- Unemployment and job loss support.