



NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR
CREDIT COUNSELING

*Knowing the difference can
make all the difference.*

NFCC PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Feb 6, 2009

Contact: Gail Cunningham
(940) 691-6322 – direct
(240) 672-2700 – cell
gcunningham@nfcc.org

SURVIVING JOB LOSS

Emotional and Financial Strain Can be Costly

Silver Spring, MD – The recent job loss numbers are staggering. Layoffs are widespread, making it hard to find a sector that has not been touched. It appears that no one, regardless of position or income level, is safe from the pink slip.

Unemployment hovers near 7.6 percent, with January numbers the worst on record since 1974, years before many of those standing in the unemployment lines were born.

Reports show that 11.6 million people are out of work. To put that into perspective, that total is almost identical to the entire combined population of the 12 smallest states. It is equivalent to every man, woman and child in Wyoming, Vermont, North Dakota, Alaska, South Dakota, Delaware, Montana, Rhode Island, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Maine and Idaho being out of work.

Never losing sight of the real people behind the numbers, the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) offers the following tips for surviving a layoff, should one occur:

- **Allow yourself to be upset or even afraid.** These are natural reactions. However, should they become intense, be willing to seek professional help. Talking things through and hearing another person's perspective can bring relief and restore your positive outlook.
- **Resist an outburst in front of your boss.** Remember, you may need him or her as a reference for a future job.
- **Take advantage of any assistance your workplace offers.** Many companies provide placement assistance, job retraining and severance packages. Make sure you are aware of all benefits offered.
- **Apply for any applicable government benefits.** Your HR representative at work should be a good resource. Stay up-to-date on benefits changes for which you may be eligible.
- **Update your resume.** If you've been at your current job for a while, you may need professional help bringing your resume current. Today resumes are often reviewed by computers and scanned for key words, so you'll want to be certain to reflect your skills in the way that benefits you most.
- **Make finding a job your new full-time job.** Get up every day, get dressed appropriate for the job you seek, and from 9:00 until 5:00 look for a new job. This search may be online or networking or actually calling on prospective employers, but the important thing is that you put yourself at the front of the line.
- **Resist the urge to solve your problems by spending recklessly.** It may feel good for the moment, but the high of spending won't equal the low of dealing with additional debt when there is no income. Further, new credit is hard to come by, so use your existing credit lines wisely.

- more -

- **Don't be tempted to live off of your credit cards.** Someone with a good line of credit could actually support the family at the current standard of living by using credit, but there's no guarantee a new position will materialize any time soon. One rule of thumb job counselors use is to expect one month of job search for each \$10,000 of annual income you hope to replace. In other words, if you seek a \$50,000 salary, it may take you five months to land that job.
- **Take a personal inventory.** Consider all assets, income and expenses. Hopefully, you will not have to liquidate any assets to survive, but it is good to know what you have to fall back on.
- **Drastic times call for drastic measures.** Nothing is off-limits. If necessary, consider selling the second car, or any recreational vehicles, real estate holdings, rental properties or jewelry.
- **After reviewing income versus debt obligations,** if there is not enough money to make ends meet, calculate how much is needed to meet the basic household living expenses. Your goal is to pay everyone, but if you must make a choice, keep your home-life stable by paying your rent or mortgage, utilities, childcare, insurance premiums, health care, food and keeping gas in the car.
- **Have a family meeting that includes the children.** You don't want people pulling in different directions, and a joint effort yields a greater result. Make cutbacks wherever possible, knowing that this austere lifestyle will only be temporary. Resolve to stop all non-essential spending immediately.
- **Tracking your spending is always a good idea, but when money is tight, it's essential.** Write down every cent you spend. At the end of 30 days, review where the money went and make conscious decisions on where to cut back. You'll be amazed by how much you can save and not even feel the pinch.
- **Contact your creditors to arrange lower payments.** Most major credit card issuers have in-house help programs. Explain your situation and what you're doing to resolve it. The creditor may be able to temporarily lower your monthly payment and reduce interest.
- **Call your mortgage lender or servicer and inform them of your situation.** Be prepared to provide them with documentation of the setback, and have a resolution plan in mind. Since the average consumer doesn't know all of the loan modifications available, it is smart to first sit down with a certified housing counselor and map out a plan. This way, you'll know that you've selected the option that is best suited to your situation.

“The numbers are brutal, and we must realize that no one is immune to a layoff. When stalwarts of the American economy lay off workers by the thousands, it is serious for our nation as a whole. Financial setbacks are never easy, but with help, most can survive unscathed,” said Gail Cunningham, spokesperson for the NFCC. “Reaching out to a trained and certified credit counselor can be one of the smartest steps a person can take during times of financial distress. Don't bury your head in the sand. Seek help early.”

You don't have to solve your financial problems alone. A National Foundation for Credit Counseling Member Agency is just a call or click away. To reach the certified credit counselor closest to you dial 1-800-388-2227, or en Español, dial 1-800-682-9832. To find an agency online go to www.DebtAdvice.org.

- 30 -

The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC), founded in 1951, is the nation's largest and longest serving national nonprofit credit counseling organization. The NFCC's mission is to promote the national agenda for financially responsible behavior and build capacity for its members to deliver the highest quality financial education and counseling services. NFCC members annually help three million consumers through nearly 850 community-based offices nationwide. For free and affordable confidential advice through a reputable NFCC member, call 1-800-388-2227, (en Español 1-800-682-9832) or visit www.nfcc.org.