

Opportunity Knocks in Loss

By Anne Wondra

The word *crisis* in Chinese is written as two ideograms (symbols) meaning Danger and Opportunity. Facing layoff and losing a job certainly fit that category. While the dangers, challenges, and the grieving/letting go process are important, here I focus on the opportunities of the situation:

- opportunity for a fresh start,
- opportunity to re-evaluate priorities;
- opportunity to rewrite your resume to reflect how you've grown and become more accomplished;
- opportunity to choose new directions if you wish;
- opportunity of spending time doing the things you love and that you never had time for;
- opportunity to be there because someone else needs your help.

Little things make a difference. And the choice to focus on opportunities, to keep a positive perspective, and act proactively is an empowering little thing that can propel one forward and feeling better. The process of grieving and letting-go is painful. It's also a natural part of the cycles and seasons of life. It's a death; and a re-birth process is in the making. Embrace the opportunities; healing, new horizons, *grace*, and surprises will follow. Life is a journey, a teacher of wisdom, a crafter of character, and an adventure in discovery.

[T] he idea that the future is always visible from the place where we stand is unrealistic. Sometimes we have to walk on for a while until a new horizon comes into view.

- Joan Borysenko

Here are four proactive things you can DO to move forward toward that next horizon.

1. Take Stock, Start Fresh, and Redirect.

First, consider the job that's ending. Is it the kind of work you thrive on? It is something you're good at? Does it challenge your intelligence and your creative ability? What skills—technical and people skills—have you acquired and used here? Is there another way to use and expand these skills, in another industry perhaps? Is this the kind of work you *want* to keep doing?

In your *Ideal Job*, what will your work look like? What will you be doing? What will give you a sense of accomplishment and pride in what you do? What is your passion—something you're naturally interested in, knowledgeable about, and lose track of time doing?

You can change directions and pursue a new career now if you choose. From an employer's perspective, there's no shame in being laid off from a job. Career changes in

these situations are common. Your experience and education are never wasted. All of it becomes part of your skill and knowledge base, and distinguishes you from others in the job market and business world. Consider where else your skill and knowledge would be a marketing asset, and perhaps what other skills you'd like to add. In the school of life, all is a stepping-stone in the process of discovering our niche and making a difference. A layoff provides time to think and re-craft our work life.

2. The *Some Day* List.

Second, remember all the things you always wanted to do but could never find the time. Was it projects around the house? People you wanted to see? A hobby or passion you love? Books you wanted to read?

Write out the list. You now have the gift of time to do what matters most. Having a plan, being able to take care of a few details, provides a sense of doing something useful, rather than wasting time. You're still working; it's just a different kind of work. And it's not any less important.

Yesterday is a cancelled check; tomorrow is a promissory note. Today is cash. Spend it well. – Author unknown.

3. Be there for someone else. Volunteer.

I expect to pass this way but once. If there be any good thing I can do, or any kindness I can show, let me do it now. For I shall not pass this way again.
- Author unknown.

The synchronicity of the *Universal Timekeeper* is impeccable, mysterious, and magical. The stories are endless of people who meet by chance and make an impact. Just as common are stories of “unplanned time off” coinciding with someone else’s “unforeseen need of assistance.” Be open to being neighborly. Consider volunteering somewhere you already have an interest in. We all have *causes of the heart*. Check the local Volunteer Center, or read the newspaper.

For some *always-got-to-be-DOING-something*-type people, the extra time on their hands, and the isolation of not going to work every day, is an especially challenging adjustment. Volunteering even a couple days a week provides a win-win arrangement: the worker with an abundance of available time and skill shares with one in need of a helping hand. Maybe the need is just for someone to be there and care.

What you have in abundance, share in abundance. – Neale Donald Walsch

Volunteering may not pay the bills. But it may provide a warm meal or two. It'll provide a way to spend time making a difference for someone else, and yourself too. Perhaps you'll gain valuable work experience, new skills to add to you resume. It's an opportunity to try something new, to put your attention on something or someone else for

a time. And it's a small world in terms of who knows whom, and who is related to whom, and how circumstances and situations circle back on us. Random acts of kindness are remembered and passed on. One caution: be genuine in your volunteer work.

4. Have a positive, proactive support system.

Finally, find or create a positive, proactive support system. A bunch of buddies bitching about the past will keep you in the past. The past can't be changed. We can learn from it and reframe it as a character-shaping part of our personal history. But there's no going back. The present is here and now; the future is in the making.

Surround yourself with good influences. What are you reading? What do you want to learn about? Visit the library. Ask if you can't find something. Check the local Workforce Development Center for dislocated worker programs. What resources are available? Utilize the ones that interest you. Make use of technology. The internet has a wealth of information at your fingertips. If you're not comfortable with computers, now is an excellent time to break yourself in gently. Use some of your time to take a class or use a simplified self-study book or CD/DVD program.

On the people side, who makes you laugh? When do you feel good about yourself? Which people bring out the best in you? Have a positive outlook? Keep you on track? Encourage and challenge you to grow? Energize you? Won't accept anything but honesty from you? And love you? These people are your support system. Seek them out regularly. Be selective in who you hang around with. Positive energy people share their energy; energy drainers deflate energy. Your choices make a difference. We often know what we need to do; support people empower and encourage us to follow through.

*On Life's adventures, take time to enjoy the roses—and be wary of the thorns.
Strategically navigate around them. – Anne Wondra*

Be gentle with yourself. Like every other transition in your life, this too will pass in time. And you will be changed; something will be new. After winter comes the spring. A word of caution: the *Universal Timekeeper* uses a different kind of time marker than the calendar.

Spirit of Truth, grant me the peace and strength to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference. – Serenity Prayer variation

May all be well with you—heart, spirit, and body.

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