

UNEMPLOYMENT - HOW TO SUPPORT FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The resources industry and economy in WA is notoriously unstable when it comes to employment and many people, not just fly in fly out workers, may experience a time of unemployment.

In fact, most people will at some point in their lives experience a period of unemployment. It is important to remember that it is nothing to be ashamed of, and is part of the working life cycle in today's society.

When we are faced with the prospect of unemployment, whether for short or lengthy time periods, it can cause significant stresses within our relationship and trigger disharmony with our partners.

Being without work can lead to feelings of frustration, disappointment, anger and stress, and you may feel like you are letting your family members down who are relying on your income.

This constant stress can lead to fights within our relationship, and can put your partnership to the test. Feelings of powerlessness, especially if you have trouble securing another job, can sometimes cause us to pull away from our family or partner, and retreat into ourselves.

During a time of unemployment, try to avoid isolating yourself from your family and friends. Maintaining open lines of communication, particularly with your partner, is crucial. This helps both of you understand what is happening to the other. Patience and empathy are important qualities during this stressful period.

Taking key steps to regain employment can also help in relieving relationship stresses and will help you get your working life back on track as soon as possible.



But what do you do if you know someone who is struggling with unemployment? Here are some tips to help your partner, family or friends who may need support during this difficult time.

1. Remain understanding and compassionate. Remember, they may be feeling frustrated and discontent during this time and having someone who they can express their concerns to will help.
2. Remind your partner/family member/friend of their importance in your life and that their job is not why you love them.
3. Offer to help with job hunting, from editing resumes and scouring job listings to networking with family and friends to discover new job opportunities. But remember just to offer, not demand or insist. They may be feeling resentful of your employment, so be mindful of how you make the offer. Asking “Would it be helpful if I....” tends to feel like an offer that is supportive.
4. If they become angry that they cannot find a job, try to avoid telling them not to feel angry. If that’s how they feel, it’s understandable. If their anger upsets you, try to let it pass you by, rather than buying into it and amplifying it. However, if the anger feels directed at you, it might be helpful to ask your partner what you can do to ease their stress and to (gently) remind them that you are on their side.
5. Encouraging a partner to talk to a counsellor about their situation can also be very useful. It is widely accepted that talking to a counsellor can greatly help us manage the emotional fall-out or consequences from unemployment.
6. Express appreciation to them for any additional tasks they do, due to having more time available. It is important for them to be, and feel like, a contributing member of the relationship or friendship team.
7. Try to find the balance that works - between being caring and interested in how they are going with the job hunting, and them feeling pressured by constantly being asked about it. It can be helpful to check this out by asking them what they’d prefer.



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