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## I Still Have My Job, So Why Do I Feel So Bad?

If your company has recently gone through layoffs and you didn't lose your job, you may be experiencing a wide array of emotions, including relief, sadness, fear and even anger. One of the most common and strongest responses to change is a feeling of loss. It is important to identify these feelings, validate their effect on you as an individual and on the workplace as a whole, then devise strategies to help move to a place of acceptance and a new "normal."

### What are you feeling?

When a major shift or change occurs within an organization, it is normal for employees to experience the feeling of loss in several different areas. These can include:

**Security:** Employees no longer feel in control or know what the future holds, or where they stand in the organization. Fear of being the next to lose one's job can interfere with an employee's commitment to the organization and can inhibit productivity.

**Competence:** Employees no longer feel like they know what to do or how to manage their career. The fear of the unknown can shatter confidence and leave employees feeling stuck. In addition, often times an employee's workload can increase significantly, causing one to feel overwhelmed and create feelings of incompetence.

**Relationships:** Familiar contact with people (co-workers, customers, managers) can disappear. People often lose their sense of belonging to a team, a group or the company. It can be unsettling for the employees left behind to walk into the workplace after a downsizing. Seeing empty desks, noticing the quietness, eating lunch alone... the effects of the layoff will be everywhere.

**Sense of direction:** Employees lose an understanding of where they are going and why they are going there. Meaning and mission often become unclear. Instead of feeling united in purpose and direction, they feel adrift and unfocused.

**Feelings of guilt:** Some employees may experience feelings of guilt and question why they were kept and others were let go. It may not be clear how or why certain decisions were made regarding the downsizing.

**Territory:** Employees have an uncertain feeling about the area that used to belong to them. This can be workspace, responsibilities, job assignments or reporting relationships. Territory includes psychological space as well as physical space.

### So what can you do? Talk about it!!

Research shows talking about change and the feelings associated with a downsizing is the best medicine for those left behind.

1. **Don't be a victim.** Talk about your fears, your feelings. Don't try to protect others from your feelings. \*Get involved. \*Ask questions. \*Seek answers.
2. **Share information.** Offices buzz with speculations after a major downsizing. Why did it happen? Who is next? While the rumors eventually die down, the fear and anger don't dissipate as quickly. \*Be proactive. \*Never rely on rumors. \*Ask for information. \*Try not to get trapped in negative office talk.
3. **Expect change to be hard.** Acknowledge that there will be tough times ahead. Some days will be harder than others. Know that this will not be a permanent situation though. Over time

there will be acceptance and new norms. \*Manage your expectations. \*Know that hard times may happen. \*Expect that acceptance and better times are also ahead.

4. **Maintain old friendships.** It is natural to feel uneasy around a recently 'downsized' coworker. Not knowing what to say and feeling guilty for still having a job are normal feelings. \*Don't avoid the lost workers. \*Focus more on personal friendship than work talk.
5. **Ask for help.** Call your EAP. *PAS is available 24/7/365.*