

Do You Suffer From Survivor Syndrome?

You're sad, you're scared, and you're worried that your job might be the next to go. You're also relieved, you're thankful, and you feel guilty that you still have a job. You find yourself thinking, "I still have my job, why don't I feel good about it?"

The majority of what we read and hear about employees affected by layoffs and downsizing focuses on those who have lost their job. That is only half of the story – those who are left behind in the workplace are also impacted and experience a great sense of loss and a wide range of emotions when their coworkers leave.

No matter what your relationship was with your coworkers, you are grieving. You valued the people who shared your office space or sat in the next cubicle. That coworker is leaving or may already be gone and your emotions are real. Find comfort in knowing that grief, as well as the other emotions you are experiencing are normal when these things happen.

Here are a few tips to help you cope with the loss:

- **Recognize that your emotions are real** and that it takes time for your current emotional response to subside. In organizations where managers recognize and acknowledge this emotional component in a downsizing, employees return to productivity much sooner.
- **Attempt to recreate the daily patterns** you experienced prior to the layoffs. The sooner you can get back to your prior routine, the better it is for your mental health.
- **Treat yourself with kindness.** Now is the time to eat a portion of your favorite comfort food. Bring in a casserole or cookies that coworkers can share. Small gestures mean a lot in the post layoffs workplace.
- **Talk out your feelings** with coworkers who are likely experiencing loss just as you are. You can comfort one another.
- Pay attention to the **needs of the coworkers who were laid off.** These are your friends and they may be experiencing serious issues with self-worth and loss. You will both feel better if you continue your weekly lunch date and/or let them vent and listen to see how you can lend support. Sometimes, active listening is all they need.
- If you are taking these steps but you are feeling increasingly worried or depressed, **seek professional assistance** through your Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) or use your private insurance to cover counseling. It is more important than ever to take care of yourself and get back on track.