

'Back yourself': How to cope with a redundancy



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Made redundant? Here's how to protect your mental health. Image: Getty

Hundreds of thousands of Australians have lost their jobs since the Covid-19 crisis battered the tourism, aviation, hospitality and retail sectors leaving the country at risk of a mental illness avalanche.

But there are proven techniques the newly redundant can use to protect their mental health after that difficult conversation, career expert and founder of Corporate Dojo Karen Gately told *Yahoo Finance*.

The first step is to accept reality.

“When we rail against reality, when we want to bridge a gap to get somewhere we prefer to be and we feel powerless to get there, that creates a great deal of anxiety and stress,” Gately said.

That denial can lead to burnout as it can become more difficult to believe that things will get better.

“The first thing we have to do, is accept the reality that the world is going through what we’re going through, and [the likes of Qantas](#) and other employers will make decisions they need to survive.”

The second step is to assess your position. That means analysing your skills, interests and backgrounds.

“We need to make sure we’re going down the path of choosing to see what our strengths are,” she said.

Doing this is critical in bolstering confidence and self belief. And it’s also important to consider which of your skills are directly transferable.

“If we’re talking about people in the airline industry, one of the realities that might need to be accepted is that it’s likely going to be very difficult to replace that job in the foreseeable future.

“So this is about asking, ‘What has my experience given me, and what skills can I offer? What are my passions? Is now a time to take a leap of faith in a direction I’ve always wanted to?’”

If workers do this, they’ll find it easier to focus on the opportunities of the future, but also to put their hand up for roles.

“When we have a diminished view of who we are and what we’re capable of, people either directly or indirectly intuitively pick up on that.”

How do you assess your skills?



Thousands of Qantas workers were made redundant. (Matt Sayles/AP Images for Qantas)

Gately said it's important to think about the job outcomes at your previous role, rather than just your skills.

"If we take a flight attendant, for example, it's obviously not just about the food service, even though many of those workers might say, 'We're customer service people.'

"Actually, it's a lot more than that. This group of workers deal with people who are highly stressed all day every day - nothing makes people more fearful than getting on a plane.

"So, they're dealing with highly tense situations and they're having to obviously remain composed themselves if things go wrong - there's a whole host of character traits and interpersonal engagement skills, but also an eye for detail. You don't get to say, 'Oh sorry, I forgot to lock the door.' There's a real system and process you have to master."

Gately said all of those baseline capabilities are directly transferable into many other roles.

She said it's a similar case to ex-servicepeople going into the business world; they bring discipline and accountability, as well as an eye for compliance.

"Those skills are often highly sought after in production, engineering and operational roles."

She said newly redundant Australians need to ask themselves, 'What have I done?'

Skills like attention to detail, decision-making, composure and understanding of processes and operations would be sought after in many businesses.

"This is not to suggest that every employer will be open-minded, but you have to be," Gately added.

"You have to know what you can offer, because you have to be able to teach that to them with conviction and confidence so that they can see that."

Then, it's about preparing for the application challenge and adjusting expectations.

Gately said it's important to accept that you will be knocked back, potentially many times. And in some cases, you won't even hear why or that you didn't get the job.

But it's critical to remember that the decision not to let applicants know the result of their application is a failure on the part of the employer, not the jobseeker.

"You have no evidence that it's a reflection on you. They may have had some really strange selection criteria that made them cut down the 5,000 applications they got to the five that they considered," Gately said.

"Just because there's silence doesn't mean that you weren't right for that role... Maintain that belief in your own self worth. I know that's easier said than done, but keep coming back to that list of things you can bank on that are real about skills, values and success."

And if you are getting a lot of knockbacks, Gately said it's worth asking if you have leveraged your network enough. This can mean asking people to test your CV, your application and help you figure out where you might be going wrong.

Then, be targeted.

"Treat each application as an individual opportunity. People make the mistake of going through a mass job application process and sending the same letter to all of these employers, and it's very hit and miss," Gately said.

"So be really targeted in the opportunities you go for so you can be really clear in your mind around why you are great for the role and how you can be an advantage to that employer."

I don't think I'll ever work again: What do I do?



Many Australians will retire earlier than planned. Image: Getty

For many Australians, a redundancy can come with the fear that they will never work again, particularly among older workers.

Gately said those who aren't ready to be a retiree should consider other paths.

"It's about confidence but it's also about finding a sense of purpose. If you're in a position financially to [retire] but you weren't ready mentally or emotionally to become a retiree, then it's worth considering what can you do with your time?"

That could be starting a small business that doesn't have a lot of overheads, or taking on a mentor role to people in the industry or it could be volunteering at a not-for-profit, or even going back and studying.

"It's something that you feel energised thinking about doing and then you are able to get that structure. People get lost when they don't work and they wake up in the morning and there's nothing purposeful."

"As soon as we're attached to something... then we're more likely to invest time and energy into that, regardless of the financial return."

And finally, Gately said it's okay to ask for help as redundancies can be a tough journey.

"If you need help, put your hand up and ask for it. A demographic in our community that aren't always inclined to ask for help are particularly Baby Boomer men," she said.

"It is hard and it's okay to feel that but just make sure you get the advice you need and the support you need. Give yourself a break, be kind to yourself and just reach out."

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