

## Maintaining Morale During Your Job Search: Top 15 Tips

Maybe you've been laid off recently. Maybe, like me, you've been looking for a long time now.

But whether you're dealing with the fresh kick in the gut of a recently-lost job or the long and winding grind of an extended job search, there are several things you can do to help keep your attitude positive.

Keeping your morale high and your attitude positive will serve you in many ways, no matter how long you're searching: you'll be in a better position to avoid stress-related illnesses; you'll be able to project yourself well during your interactions with prospective employers; and when you start working again, you'll be able to start your new job in a state of high energy.

Granted, the millions of us who are unemployed or underemployed in this economy know that keeping a positive attitude during these hard times takes work. Given that this work will help us in both the short and the long term, however, it's more than worth the effort.

The following Top 15 Tips come from my recent research and my own experience of what seems to be working.

### **The Obvious Tips**

**Some of these very obvious tips are also some of the most important; they are the foundation that will allow us to keep up our health and energy throughout our job search.**

- 1. Create a regular schedule for yourself – treat your job search like a job.**  
This tip reeks of common sense. After all, we've been used to a regular schedule. And while it can be tempting to let that schedule go, doing so can make us feel more lost and out of touch with the working world that we need to re-join.
- 2. Be realistic.**  
You may find your next job in a week. After all, anything's possible. It's far more likely, however, that it will take much longer than that.
- 3. Make time to exercise, and eat as healthy and well-balanced a diet as you can.**  
Yes, healthy food is more expensive. But fast food and other unhealthy foods cost more in the long run in medical bills; nor will those kinds of foods give you the lasting energy you need to keep going. As for exercise, I've found that working out actually helps me relieve stress, so I have to agree with the experts on this one.
- 4. Harden yourself to rejection, and don't take hiring decisions personally.**  
This advice is relevant in good times and bad. As long as you can't point to

anything you did incorrectly, it's more than likely that you've been rejected for reasons that had little to nothing to do with you personally.

5. **Create achievable, small goals for yourself – and celebrate your successes.**  
Make your goals quantifiable -- a specific number of resumes sent and follow-up calls done per day, for example. And make sure to pat yourself on the back when you've done them. A job or career search is a process, especially during a recession, and we need all of the encouragement we can give ourselves to get through it.
6. **Communicate with your family.**  
Make time to walk away from your computer and interact with the people whom you love and who love you. Your immediate family doesn't just count on you for a paycheck; you ought to be able to count on each other for making plans, creating financial coping strategies, and mutual support. If you don't let them in, don't expect them to know how to help you
7. **Find a local support group.**  
Communicating with your family is good. But constantly venting to your family (and/or your friends) will only increase everyone's stress. Finding other people who are also going through what you're experiencing, however, will not only give you support but give you an opportunity to feel useful by supporting others.
8. **Remind yourself as often as you can that your unemployment is temporary.**  
Think of the worst experience you've ever had. That's right -- "had," meaning that it's over now and you've come out the other end. Someday, you'll also be able to look back on the time when you were unemployed. Looking forward to that day can be a helpful way to get through this day.
9. **Stay away from naysayers.**  
If all your good friend Charlie can do is talk about how bad things are, it's time to take a break from Charlie. And while staying up with current events is an important duty, taking a break from keeping up depressing economic news will probably help you conserve energy for dealing with your personal economy. Nor are the experts always right -- for example, in 2007 the experts said that Barack Obama didn't have a shot at the presidency.

## The Not-So Obvious Tips

**While I could have come up with most of the above list of obvious tips from my current experience and with a bit of thought, the following tips from my research sounded so fantastic that I plan on using them for the rest of my job search, and perhaps beyond.**

10. **Make the time to enjoy your extra time.**  
Yes, it's important to maintain a schedule -- but be sure to include time for you in that schedule. This is the time to visit museums, your local library, zoos, and to do the things that give you joy and make you feel rewarded. You can use this time to stretch your mind -- I've taken up chess again after not playing since my teens -- and to learn new skills that will serve you in your next job.

**11. Evaluate your priorities for your career and your life.**

Granted, the need to find that next job feels all-consuming. It can be very difficult to see this time as what it is: a huge opportunity to decide and get ourselves on a track that will bring us personal happiness as well as financial security. If you felt at least somewhat relieved to be laid off, this is the time to evaluate what did not suit you about your last job and to refine your career and life goals. Yes, you may need to take anything that offers itself for now, but having a clear set of goals and priorities will help you move beyond the job that's available now to the one you'll want to have in the near or mid-term future.

**12. Volunteer.**

But, don't we want and need to be paid? Yes, and eventually we will be. In the meantime, giving some of our time to our community organizations and/or advocacy organizations can help us feel productive, give us contacts to aid in our job search, and perhaps even help our local community and nation recover more quickly from this recession.

**13. Keep a journal.**

As a writer, you may think I would have thought of this tip myself, but I hadn't. You can bet that now, having come across it in my research, I'm going to start keeping a journal of all of the steps in my job search and my day-to-day feelings while searching. Doing this isn't just cathartic -- it'll help you stay organized and provide you a valuable tool to see what is and is not working before you've spent a lot of time on failed tactics.

**14. Keep up with your hobbies.**

Don't punish yourself by denying yourself the activities that made you feel like a complete person when you were working. Playing an instrument, gardening, doing cross stitch -- make sure to keep these things up to the extent that your budget will allow. It's not healthy to let a job, or a job search, become the entire focus of your life.

**15. Never let anyone, particularly strangers who don't really know you, make you feel bad about yourself.**

In America we have a bad habit of defining ourselves by the jobs we do. You may find people who have kept their job (so far) being judgmental of you for having lost yours. Don't let them affect your feelings about yourself; they're probably just being harsh with you to cover up their own self-esteem issues and job fears anyway.

## **Remember -- Control the Things You Can**

Using the above tips may well help all of us discover that we have far more control over our lives and our fortunes than we'd ever thought possible.

*Unknown author and source.*