

Moving Through Job Loss

30 Days of Reflections and Tips
for Tapping Your Resilience

Nan S. Russell



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by
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MOVING THROUGH JOB LOSS:

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Introduction

“The only way is through.”

~ Robert Frost

Job loss in good times is a disturbing, distressing experience. But these are not good times. Economic upheaval, social unrest, a deadly worldwide pandemic, and uncertainty about the future brings with it individual and collective psychological trauma.

Your energy, emotions, worries, anger, focus, well-being, concerns, and fears can manifest themselves in a variety of ways. Don't judge. Be compassionate with yourself. And with others.

Be gentle with yourself, too. *Do what you can when you can*; even small nibbles a few times a week can move you forward, offer a bit of routine, and nudge you toward taking steps to control some of what can be controlled.

This book is intended as a positive energy source. It blends inspiration, hope, and real-world perspectives. It's not intended as a motivational kick in the behind, nor is it a job hunting how-to, career advice, or work-problem solving book.

Rather, it's self-discovery framed in reality and designed to offer a spark or two to reignite your determination, and reconnect you with the best of who you are, at a core level.

It's also self-directed. It can be read in any way that makes sense for you. Here are two ideas: read it as a 30 day, daily reflection with affirmation; or read it as a random day selection to

nudge insights and inner work. The tips can be read one a day along with a daily reflection, or used as a separate resource or idea generator for you.

Give yourself a gift of 3-5 minutes without distractions. If possible, read a daily reflection and/or tip around the same time each day, ideally before checking messages or the news. And reread pages along the way. Thirty days is not a magic number. It's a beginning.

Doing this can help you tap into your resilience, work through emotional inner work which job loss entails, and rekindle positive energy. It's intended to offer a thought-provoking message, a practical tip, or just something to consider. Hopefully, it brings you insights and actions to assist you in regaining your work momentum.

Everyone's job loss experience is different, even if it resulted from a similar event – e.g. economic upheaval during 2020 Pandemic, corporate acquisition, leadership change, etc. While such an event may be the catalyst, our situation, finances, goals, skills, and motivation are as individual as we are.

For the most part, then, the material concentrates on moving *through* job loss as an individual process. It's an approach intended to enable you to reconnect with your core and find inner strength after job loss. But like most things, you'll get out of it what you put into it. I encourage you to do the reflective thinking and suggested actions.

While my experience is different from yours, my interest in job loss impact began early. I was fired from my first professional

job and experienced the emotional upheaval and reduced self-esteem job loss triggers. No matter how it happens, job loss impacts us on many levels. Some we can see, such as diminished financial well-being, sleep interruptions, and reduced energy. And some we can't see. These are the ones happening inside us: fear, worry, distress, confusion, anger, dread, anxiety, and many more. Sometimes we can label the emotions we feel, and sometimes we can't. Either way, how we appear on the outside may be vastly different from our inner world and well-being.

This book was born from that latter vantage point – the inner impact of job loss. I've worked with hundreds of people through the years, including during and after the Great Recession, to help them bring the best of who they are to their work and life. My role is as a catalyst, helping people find and use their own good wisdom.

I don't pretend to have the answers, nor do I profess to understand anyone's individual challenges or circumstances. I don't intend my words as some magical antidote for the emotional pain that job loss brings. Rather, I'm offering a few thoughts and ideas from a spirit of community. I believe it's only when we're all winning that we truly all win. It is from that personal philosophy this book was written.

My hope is you'll find these concepts and tips useful as you move through the transition process from job loss to job success. So, take and use what works for you; ignore the rest.

Most of us don't accomplish what we desire without the help of others, and that's true with this mini book. My friend and colleague, Beth Pelkofsky, was instrumental in bringing the idea for

this book to light, and has been a partner in reading, editing, and enhancing its messages. Plus, a special thanks to my husband, Dan, whose technical help assisted me in bringing these words to readers. Thank you both for your continued help and support.

Whether you stopped looking for a job out of frustration, economic upheaval, or rejection, or are just now beginning your job loss recovery process, I hope the next 30 days of daily reflections and tips will tap your resilience and ignite your determination.

Nan Russell

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Something to *T*hink *A*bout – To Get You Started

If you haven't read the introduction, I encourage you to start there.

Look up the unemployment rate on the day you read this. Where you live may be double digits.

Now reverse that percentage. You've been thinking how many people are unemployed. How hard it will be to get a job.

Instead, start thinking about how many people are employed. Picture it. Call it to mind. Post it on your screen saver.

See yourself joining the *employed* percentage. Hold that thought prominently each day until it's true.

And while you do, add these four thoughts to the mix:

1. My job loss is temporary.

You without a job is a state of temporariness, lasting for a limited amount of time, painful as that may be – as long as that may be.

Not having a job is as temporary as summer and winter, snowstorms and droughts, TV shows and hemlines. Yet the reality is that a state of temporary can still be a long time, require a role adjustment, or bring a changed future.

But no matter how long temporary is, if you give up looking for a job, you'll make it permanent.

As Thomas Edison cautions, *"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."*

How you deal with setbacks (big or small) determines results. Failure is *not* the lack of success. Failure is staying down when you trip or stumble. It's giving up, checking out, or shutting down.

Think of job loss as a temporary speed bump, which in the scheme of things, does slow you down – but it shouldn't stop you.

I know. It doesn't feel that way while it's happening. That's because the "going through" process is exhausting, just like sleepless parenting nights or caretaking roles can be.

2. I'm in good company.

Successful people fail, talented people lose their jobs, great contributors stumble, and terrific performers get rejected. It's reality.

Losing your job puts you in the great company of people like Walt Disney, J.K. Rowling, Jerry Seinfeld, Oprah Winfrey, Elvis Presley, Steve Jobs, Mark Cuban, Hugh Jackman, and Michael Bloomberg. They've been thrust from jobs, too.

When we view others' success, we often miss their life happens events, failed choices, struggles, or disappointments. We miss noticing the wrong or closed doors that came before their accolades.

Don't lose sight of the good company you keep.

3. This is an opportunity for growth.

Job loss is loss, certainly, but it also can be a time of profound growth. It can open your heart to others, increase your compassion, and offer you new understanding about what really matters.

It can affect your understanding of who you are at the core, ground you in what you have, not what you don't have, and open new roads to explore. It can enhance skills, change directions, and offer insights about your strengths, abilities, and values.

Stay open to the growth that change and transition can bring.

Unwelcomed life-happenings mold us, too. Some of them may challenge who we are, push us to tap our resilience, help us learn

unconditional love, and offer different pathways for growth and understanding.

As the Dalai Lama reminds us, *“The period of greatest gain in knowledge and experience is the most difficult period in one’s life.”*

4. I’ll never be the same (and life as I knew it may not be either).

My experience with job loss changed my life – for the better. Still when it happened, the vice-grip of embarrassment, the numbness of shock, and the adrenaline of fueled anger and worry made being fired devastating.

Now I’m grateful someone had the courage to thrust me from that ill-suited job, forcing me to explore new career possibilities.

The Great Recession changed my life, too. And not for the better. Decades of building a financial safety net for a second-act career evaporated as fast as water on summer asphalt, leaving years filled with emotional angst, painful decisions, and diminished well-being.

Still that experience revealed things to me, about me, I never knew (not all good), grounding me even more in a personal quest to center my life around things that matter, in the bigger scheme of things.

The reality is this, or at least it is from my multiple decades of living: while this, too, shall pass that doesn’t mean the process will be easy until it does, or that we will like the outcome.

Sometimes we like the change; sometimes we don’t. Regardless, when change happens it’s not that we need to get over it, we need to know how to get through it. That requires tapping inner strength.

How we do that is as individual as we are. No matter the how, life’s potholes and bumps shape and evolve us, both positively and negatively. They contribute to who we are, who we become, and how we think about ourselves.

Bottom Line

These thoughts may be hard today for you to hold, depending on the rawness of your news, the challenges of your situation, the results of your job search, or the difficulties of rebooting your emotional and financial well-being.

These thoughts and others like them in pages to come, can be even harder to hold against the backdrop of a world, yours or our collective one, if it feels like its swirling out of control, fueled by rampant fears of the unknown.

Perspective comes with time, certainly, but hope is housed in the wise words of Abraham Lincoln, “The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time.”

You can rebuild your future, one day and one thought at a time. And you can do it starting today.

30 Days of Reflections

day one

River Rocks

“Most of the shadows of this life are caused by standing in one’s own sunshine.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sometimes life goes along beautifully, flowing in a comfortable direction, feeling wonderful, beautiful, magical. But then “life happens.” Something changes. And the flow of your life is altered.

These unexpected, unwanted, or unchangeable occurrences can leave days, months or even years flooded with sticky mud that hide life’s color and beauty.

These are the times it’s easy to anesthetize ourselves with wine, food, or self-sabotaging behaviors. These are the times our self-esteem erodes, our actions become inactions, and our disinterest pulls us deeper. These are the times we lose our grounding.

We may not be able to stop the muddy, messy, confusing times of life from happening.

But the mud will settle and when it does, you will clearly see that the river rocks of your life were always there for you to draw upon. They were your foundation under the mud. Rocks like love, family, friendship, talents, passion, resilience, and faith.

Affirmation: I will be left with new strength, insights, and personal growth when this mud does settle. My river rocks are always there to provide strength and perseverance.

day two

Taming Monsters

“Don’t believe everything you think.”

~ Sign on Author’s Desk

Voices of Judge, Critic, Analyzer, Derailer, Unlovable, Fear, Shame, and Not Enough are an arsenal that ambushes confidence, killing ideas, and pushing us to shadowy places.

Judge and Critic visit more frequently. Others, like Shame and Not Enough, wait like cats ready to pounce when least expected.

But you’re in charge of what you put in your head. You’re in charge of what you believe about yourself. And if you don’t like the thoughts that pop in, you’re also in charge of creating new ones.

Self-talk makes a difference in how you view you. It also makes a difference in how you experience life, others, and the world around you.

Feeling vulnerable? Think you’re being judged because you don’t have a job? Or are experiencing financial upheaval? Or doubting yourself and your ability to weather this storm?

Don’t let these doubt-monsters take residence in your head, hijack your accomplishments, or diminish your self-esteem.

Affirmation: I can tame negative voices and add positive ones. I am in charge of what I think. As I change my thoughts, I change my life.

day three

All Done

*“Take your mind out every now and then and dance on it.
It is getting all caked up.”*

~ Mark Twain

Enough anger. Enough pain. Enough shame.

Enough worry. Enough shoulda or coulda.

Enough sadness. Enough fear.

You’re “all done” with those emotions, at least for today. Let them go. They’ll be there to pick up tomorrow if you need to hold them again.

Today you need your energy replenished, your spirit nurtured, and your heart opened. Your soul longs for connection.

What do you like? Is it sand between your toes or waves against your body? Hiking in the woods or breathing in the stillness? Sitting by the fire or devouring a novel? A relaxing meditation or a heart-racing game? Time alone or time with friends?

It doesn’t matter. Bring play and laughter and curiosity into your day.

Affirmation: Today I will renew my spirit. I am on vacation today from anger, frustration, disappointment, and pain.

day four

In the Scheme of Things

“When asked if my cup is half-full or half-empty my only response is that I am thankful I have a cup.”

~ Sam Lefkowitz

Stop for a moment. Breathe deeply. Put job loss in perspective.

Amidst the anger, fear, and rejection, pause to consider what’s going right.

You may not have a job, but what do you have? A loving family? Supportive friends? Great kids? Good health? Enough food? A place to live? Abilities and talents? Make a list.

It’s easy to focus on what’s lacking, what we’re missing, what we don’t have.

But for today, focus on what you do have. Notice the prosperity in your other life areas. See your life through a clear lens and be grateful.

In the scheme of things, you lost your job. Step back and see all that is not lost to you.

Affirmation: There is still abundance in my life.

day five

Falling Down

“When you give up your dream, you die.”

~ Line from the movie *FlashDance*

How much longer until that first day of a new job? How much more disappointment? Worry? Financial concern?

One day. One hundred. One thousand. Whatever it takes. It's time to bubble-wrap your heart for the rest of the journey.

As a child you didn't let a few skinned knees keep you from your skateboard or roller skates or bike.

It's not the doubts or disappointments or the falling down that matters in this pursuit. Or in the pursuit of what you dream for your future. What matters is getting up.

Affirmation: I will get up and try again today.

Ancora Imparo

Translated as "I am still learning" or "Still, I am learning"

~ Attributed to Michelangelo in his 87th year

The man who painted the Sistine Chapel and sculpted the Pieta and David, whose very name evokes mastery of his craft, exemplifies an important learning philosophy.

Consider the plight of the blacksmith. From the iron age to nearly the industrial age, blacksmiths prospered. Villagers needed plows, shovels, iron wheels for wagons, nails, and tools to build homes that the blacksmiths forged.

They needed horses and oxen shod and tools repaired. Being a blacksmith was a sound professional choice. But in a few generations that vital profession was eliminated.

Like a mirage in a desert with no life-sustaining water, there's no payoff staying where you are or stagnating in yesterday's know-how. Life is anything but static.

Learning refreshes your dreams, expands your comfort zone, and offers you new-fashioned paths to consider. Learning keeps you connected to the speed of life.

Affirmation: I am not too old to learn, to grow, or to change industries or careers. I will invest in myself and my future by making ancora imparo a guiding principle for life. I will not go the way of the blacksmith.

day seven

*T*rusting Again

"We can't wait for the world to change. We need to be out there doing it."

~ CNN Hero 2008 Award Winner

None of us want to be naïve, to accept mistruths, believe false promises, or follow herd mentality.

But harboring mistrust, holding on to anger, or clinging to yesterday's mistakes can limit your future as simply as a three-foot wall traps an impala.

This African animal can jump nearly 10 feet, covering distances of more than 30, but it doesn't jump if it can't see where its feet will land.

Are you doing the workplace equivalent?

If you won't trust again unless you know the trust given won't be betrayed; won't risk again unless you know it's risk-proof; won't step out to offer your talents where needed unless asked, you're creating a self-limiting enclosure for your future, and perpetuating yesterday's workplaces and cultures.

Affirmation: I will not opt out of making a contribution. I will not deny myself or my children the hope that tomorrow's workplace can be better than today's. I will help rebuild the trust.

day eight

Backbone Needed

“The miracles of genius always rest on profound convictions which refuse to be analyzed.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

The difference between being *for* something versus being *against* something is significant. It may seem like semantics, but it's not.

When you're *for* something more backbone is needed, more independent thinking is required, more integration between who you are and how you operate is necessary.

When you're *for* something, you're working towards what you want to bring about or contribute to, and that shifts accountability, energy, and commitment. Being *for* something requires strength of convictions and a willingness to stand up for them.

People with resilience, determination, and a winning at working approach understand it's when they tap into a purpose bigger than themselves that they offer the best of who they are to their work and the world.

Meaningful contribution comes when you work for something you care about. And you don't need a paying job to do that.

Affirmation: I will be for what I value. I will be for what I aspire to bring about in my life. I will be for what I want more of in my community.

day nine

Asking for Help

“Treat people as if they were what they should be, and you help them become what they are capable of becoming.”

~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

There’s something about asking for help that gets some people stuck. Maybe you don’t want to seem foolish. Or stupid. Or dependent. Or needy. Or imperfect.

Not knowing how to do something or how to figure it out can push our frustration button.

We equate needing help with being weak, and not needing it as being strong. But here’s the truth of it – we all need help in life.

Most of us don’t grow our food, make our electricity, weave our fabric, sew our clothes, do surgery on our bodies, invent our medicine, film our movies, or build our computers. We depend on knowledgeable others for these and many other day-to-day needs.

We’re dependent on others for non-things too. Love. Friendship. Compassion. Information. Insight.

Needing, asking for, and accepting help isn’t strong or weak. It’s just human.

Affirmation: I will ask for the help I need.

day ten

Working for the Right Person

“Man’s biggest mistake is to believe that he’s working for someone else.”

~ Nashua Cavalier

When you think you work for other people instead of for yourself, you’re less likely to invest in self-development, put in the time and determination, or make the trade-offs to achieve your goals.

You’re less likely to use your unique gifts to make a difference in your community or the world; less likely to weather economic potholes.

Look in the mirror. You know what jobs to seek, skills to enhance, and opportunities to seize.

You know when to change paths and when to weather the storm.

Working for yourself is not about being an entrepreneur, owning your own business, or being self-employed. It’s a vision, not a vocation.

Affirmation: It is time I start working for the right person.

Grow Thicker Skin

*“If you want to limit yourself, that’s fine.
But don’t let other people do it for you.”*

~ From the movie, Gracie

Piercing words, harsh feedback, or demeaning critics can diminish your courage or cause you to change direction.

That’s why in this age of text messaging, anonymous online ramblings, and self-appointed “experts,” thick skin is a prerequisite for anyone who wants to be winning at working and finding and building job prosperity.

In virtually every situation you face, there will be 30 percent of people who will like what you do, 30 percent who won’t like it, and the rest who don’t know or won’t care either way.

So, when you happen to be in the 30 percent who likes someone else’s work, why not tell them? A few kind words can strengthen someone else’s resolve. Difficult times are a great time to help each other persevere.

After all, it’s only when we’re all winning, that we truly all win. And then we won’t need such thick skin.

Affirmation: I will not be deterred by discouraging words or difficult roadblocks. I will encourage others and myself to persist, and “go for it.”

day twelve

Finding What Matters

“If you have only one smile in you, give it to the people you love. Don't be surly at home, then go out in the street and start grinning 'Good morning' at total strangers.”

~ Maya Angelou

When I was a young professional, like many of my colleagues, I thrived on the challenge, the excitement, and the creativity of my work. Yet behind the achievements, the nice pay, and the challenging work, something was missing.

Seduced by what I was doing, I lost sight of why I was doing it. My life was very full; full of things like answering messages, attending meetings, and finishing projects.

The people I most cared about became one more task on my to-do list; one more interruption to pressing deadlines where self didn't make the list.

Along the way, I lost my way. I got so caught up in the things that didn't matter, I couldn't always see the things that did.

I began to feel there was something missing in my life, the part called living. When I paused long enough to be honest with myself, I also noticed the part of me that I knew as “the real me” was missing, too.

What about you?

Affirmation: I know my life is not a practice round. Finding what matters is what matters.

day thirteen

Defining Moments

“Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things – a chance word, a tap on the shoulder, or a penny dropped on a newsstand – I am tempted to think ... there are no little things.”

~ Bruce Barton

We know the big moments or decisions that change our life – marriage, children, illness, loss. But often we don’t consider the power behind other moments. How we respond to smaller incidents can be defining, too.

We all have them. Those small incidents, chance remarks, or simple decisions that change the fabric of our motivation, perspective, or fortitude. An encouraging word. A rejection. An evaluation.

These moments change how we see ourselves, building or diminishing our confidence, or defeating or engaging our spirit.

Accepting an opinion as fact or a rejection as limiting, without any self-reflection or additional feedback can diminish your potential and derail your efforts. Bottom-line? Some defining moments strengthen you; some don’t. But not all moments we consider are defining moments, should be.

Affirmation: I decide which small moments are defining for my life. I choose to attach significance or let them go.

day fourteen

The Next One

“He who moves not forward, goes backwards”.

~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

When Peter Drucker, who at the time was into his eighties with over 30 books to his credit, was asked by an interviewer which of his thirty-some books he was most proud of, he quickly responded, “The next one.”

People most proud of “the next one” are contributors, seekers, and thinkers. They’re constantly growing, learning, and reinventing themselves. They’re coming up with new ideas, insights, and perspectives.

These people don’t define themselves by what they’ve done. They keep moving forward, in thought, action, and results.

Don’t be about yesterday’s work, yesterday’s accomplishments, or yesterday’s success. Think instead, what am I doing today? What am I building for tomorrow? How am I contributing now?

Your proudest moments are yet to come. It’s your next job, your next idea, your next contribution that builds on your last.

Affirmation: What have I done today? How can I best contribute today; I am about the future.

/t Takes a Little Fear

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’”

~ Mary Anne Radmacher

It doesn’t matter what our self-fears are or why we give them power. What matters is if we let them limit us; if we trade our comfort for our relevance and compromise our potential to eliminate that pit in our stomach. And if we do, we often leave our dreams on the shelf.

Reality doesn’t always allow us to follow the path we’d like. There are compromises and responsibilities and needs which drive life decisions. But these are different from being a passenger in our own life, or determining our actions based on self-fears.

People who seek job prosperity and stable futures push past their fears.

They seize their nervous apprehensions and self-limiting concerns, recognizing it takes a little fear to sharpen their skills, push them to the next level, enhance their talents, or maximize their growth.

It takes a little fear to dare to become who you are capable of becoming. And it takes a little fear to offer your uniqueness to the world in spite of insecurities, naysayers, and comfort zones.

Affirmation: I will not allow my fears to hijack my future, limit my possibilities, or contain my dreams. I will seize my fear and not allow it to control me. I will push myself to the next level.

day sixteen

Let Go of the Bricks

“If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed.”

~ Chinese Proverb

It's not enough to accept that your past can't be changed.

If you allow the emotional bricks you've attached to recent employment and financial events to weigh you down, your past affects your future.

Some of your bricks may be etched with shock, violated trust, disappointment in self and others. Others may come with feelings of anger, resentment, guilt, remorse, and unfairness.

Some bricks you carved. Some others carved for you. No matter how they came to be, they hold you down like a jammed log in a spring river.

Let them go. You no longer need to carry them. Your future is brighter, your load lighter, with each one that you drop.

Affirmation: My life is about the choices I still get to make. I will let go of the emotional bricks that are holding me down.

Needing and Wanting

“People need resistance, for it is resistance which gives them their awareness of life.”

~ Karl Ritter

Desiring it, craving it, or wishing for it, is distinct from a must-have state of necessity.

I mixed these concepts up for part of my life. Seduced by trappings I felt made me feel successful, I believed at the time, I needed a promotion, new house, cool car, or book contract. For what? I'm not sure now; maybe someone else's esteem or approval.

Besides life sustaining nutrients, a safe environment, self-supporting finances, and the freedoms of this country, I need family, friends, time in nature, love, and meaningful work to thrive. What do you need?

Wants are different.

Mine grow bigger each year. I want world peace, equality, trust, and love in the world. I want diseases cured, children educated, hunger eliminated, and an enduring planet for everyone's children and grandchildren. I want more of what could be. What do want?

Affirmation: May I keep my needs small but my wants, desires, and dreams for this world big. I will help create the world I imagine.

day eighteen

Everyday Cheer

“Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but the realization of how much you already have.”

~ Anonymous (On sampler in a local shop)

With or without a job, your life continues. It unfolds through the everyday acts of living; the regular stuff from paying bills to raising a family and getting through life’s challenges.

It unfolds when reading a story to your children, talking to a friend, or smiling at a stranger. It unfolds taking your dog for a walk, pulling the weeds, or devouring a great novel.

Everyday cheer is found in the little things that sustain and deepen us. It’s in hugs and smiles and gifts of time. It’s in the difficult moments, shared experiences, and ongoing struggles. And it’s in talking and sharing of life’s disappointments as well as its joys.

Let these pleasures strengthen your heart during this difficult time. Allow those who love you, to love you. And love them back. This is an opportunity to deepen your relationships.

Affirmation: I will not put life’s enjoyment on hold until I get that job. I will treasure the everyday joys and breathe in my life.

Dauntless Dreams

“Not to dream boldly may turn out to be simply irresponsible.”

~ George Leonard

We all have dreams. Some we keep sheltered, afraid to touch or share them for fear they might disintegrate when we speak the secret desires of our heart.

Others we test drive, putting them away when the road becomes difficult, long, or hard to follow.

And then there are the dreams that once acknowledged, haunt us until we find a way to manifest them.

Some dreams hold the promise of new beginnings, the craziness of audacity, or the hope for a better world.

Some dreams are about you; some about those you love; some about those you don't even know.

But all your dreams matter. They help you navigate life, planting seeds of possibility, imagination, and potential. They keep you alive, in the deepest sense of the word.

Risk of pain, disappointment and difficulties often keep us from our dreams. But there's more risk in not pursuing them. Your dreams can help change the life you have into the life you want.

Affirmation: I long to live my life's potential and contribute to this world we share. I will not give up my dreams because of this setback.

day twenty

Lonely Traveler

“The real moment of success is not the moment apparent to the crowd.”

~ George Bernard Shaw

The path looks the same. The destination sounds like yours. The hurdles appear similar.

But don't be fooled. Your path to work prosperity is not like anyone else's. It is unique to you.

Your talents are different from mine which are different from his and from hers.

You do some things better than others; others do things better than you. The baggage you carry is lighter or heavier, your blisters more tender or callused.

Learn from other traveler experiences but don't compare the journey.

Your potholes, mud-traps, scenic overlooks, and ah-ha moments will be yours alone. See them for what they are.

Rest when you need to rest. And when you do, heed where you've been, noting the progress you're making one day at a time.

Affirmation: My path to employment and renewal is mine alone. Sometimes it will feel lonely and overwhelming. Sometimes insightful and awakening. Today I continue my journey.

The Art of Change

“The illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

~ Alvin Toffler

Twenty-first century success won't be guaranteed from a particular major, a certain profession, a specific job title, or the latest skill. It won't come from discovering the right industry or company or idea. Those are moving targets.

Your future is not out there. It's inside of you.

Some say the only constant in life is change. But in your life, the only constant is *you*.

You can move with the change-currents, bobbing like a buoy in the ocean and go nowhere.

Or you can paddle your sea kayak with a sturdy oar of your unique talents, core-values, life potential, and resilient spirit, knowing it's your inner strengths that will secure your future.

Find your way in a changed and changing world through inner navigation and core connection. Calm the waves of change in your life by drawing from what's inside you that doesn't change. Only then can you make sense of what is in the outside world that does.

Affirmation: I will anchor the discomfort, uncertainty, and fear I feel that accompanies these times and its changes, to the unchangeable core within me.

Don't Be Killing Time

"We are like butterflies who flutter for a day and think it is forever."

~ Carl Sagan

We all kill time. We waste it, fritter it, consume it, and burn it.

We operate as if time were a perpetual commodity, a renewable resource for us, or a constant, like gravity.

When job loss hits, we often put life on hold.

We think that when we get that job, get our finances back in shape, and move forward toward career prosperity, we'll start living again.

But as my wall plaque reminds, "This moment is your life."

Don't surrender your moments.

In this crazy, unpredictable world, amidst life's heartaches and challenges, tomorrow isn't promised to any of us.

Whether you have a job or you don't have one right now, it doesn't matter. Now is the time you have. Use it well.

Affirmation: I will not put my life on hold while I look for a job or wait for my life to return. I will keep embracing life.

Failed Expectations

“For the concert of life, no one receives a program.”

~ Dutch Proverb

Sometimes we get what we expect and sometimes we don't.

But much of our real living and personal insights come not from getting what we want or expect or desire, but in the times when we don't.

How are you using your unexpected job situation? Your failed financial expectations? Are they a roadblock in creating your future, or a catalyst for evolving it?

Failed expectations help us encounter ourselves in new ways.

They can disappoint us, challenge us, mold us, evolve us, nudge us, or awaken us.

Job loss can be a time of great personal growth and clarity. Let your failed expectations light your future.

Affirmation: This is a time for great learning and personal insights. I will be open to learn from this difficult time. I welcome personal understanding and growth.

day twenty-four

Unexpected Pleasures

“... we can no longer afford to throw away even one ‘unimportant’ day by not noticing the wonder of it all. We have to be willing to discover and then appreciate the authentic moments of happiness available to all of us every day.”

~ Sarah Ban Breathnach

Some days you're numb to the outside world, engrossed in the next resume or interview or bill that's due.

Life's concert is playing, but you haven't tuned in. These are the days that blur together and unravel your energy.

But when you awake to small pleasures, the blur diminishes.

Hearing children laughing, seeing random acts of kindness, or appreciating bright green tree growth enriches your day just by the noticing.

Every day holds unexpected pleasures.

Even on difficult days, there's a hand offered in kindness, a stranger's smile, a new flower blooming, or a compassionate heart reaching for yours. Look up for a few seconds to notice.

Affirmation: I will look for and savor an unexpected pleasure today. I will breathe in these joyful seconds of wonder, inspiration, connection, and hope.

day twenty-five

Reforming DNA

“No Rain, No Rainbow”

~ Saying on author’s favorite t-shirt

Every headline, every book read, every person met, every experience had or heard about – good or not so good – find its way into how we think, what we believe, what we don’t believe, and who we trust or don’t trust.

Like constantly forming and re-forming DNA, these spaghetti entanglements of life shape us, inspire us, jade us, and challenge us. They embed themselves in who we become.

This job loss experience is now one of those for you.

These blasts of experience, life happens events, chance occurrences, and considered choices develop our heads, our hearts, and our spirits.

We wouldn’t be who we are without the opportunities of this century, the problems of these times, and the circumstances we face.

How we evolve in times of our rain influences other people to find a way through theirs.

Affirmation: None of us get a perfect life

Only Issues

“Learn to be okay with sad days. Then they can teach you whatever they came to teach you, move through you and move on.”

~ Marianne Williamson

We can see life’s challenges as insurmountable problems. We lose a job, or financial security, break up a relationship, struggle with child or elder care, or find our dreams blocked. These overwhelming problems are perceived as crushing our lives.

But a conference speaker, Nando Parrado, changed my perspective about problems when I heard his amazing story.

You may know it from his book *Miracle in the Andes*, or the movie *Alive*, but hearing him recount the unimaginable ordeal and unspeakable choices the sixteen rugby teammates who survived seventy-two days in subzero weather were forced to make, was powerful.

A problem is trying to survive when it’s thirty below zero, there’s no food, no winter equipment, and no one searching for you.

Now when I have what I used to consider a significant problem I hear Nando’s words. “It’s only an issue, not a problem,” I repeat to myself.

Affirmation: Repeat after me: Losing my job is only an issue, not a problem. And I can handle the issues.

A Little Magic

"Life is like a coin. You can spend it any way you wish, but you only spend it once."

~ Lillian Dickson

On a nondescript shelf, in an out of the way shop, a framed quilt held a center star on which the words *Wish Upon a Star* were stitched. Now that small quilt hangs on my office wall.

It is a reminder of simpler times, when little girls and boys could eliminate their cares by wishing on stars and believing in happily ever after fairy tales; by blowing dandelion puff balls and looking for four leaf clovers; and by pulling the covers over their heads to keep the closet-monsters at bay.

Those were the wish-upon-a-star years. And they are gone for all but the youngest of our families.

Even so, life is a wondrous journey. Painful sometimes. Difficult sometimes. But evoking always.

If you want to experience life's magic as an adult, you have to let in a little hope, joy, and possibility of what can be. Embrace it, wrestle it, dance with it, and remember, don't stop wishing on those stars.

Affirmation: I will let life in. I will go outside tonight and see the stars and moon with child-like wonder. I will even wish upon a star.

Finding Balance Again

“There are three things that a man must know to survive long in the world: what is too much for him, what is too little for him, and what is just right for him.”

~ African Proverb

Life can be like the children’s tale of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. The porridge is too hot or too cold, the chair is too big or too small, until Goldilocks finds the one that is “just right” for her. And that’s key.

In finding your balance again, what may be too much for you, may be too little for someone else and vice versa.

Emotional, spiritual, physical, social, or mental components are required to bring well-being and a sense of prosperity back into your life.

Sustainable balance is an inside job, as unique as you are. But remember, life may not be balanced at any given time.

It should come as no surprise that your life, right now, may feel out of sync.

Life shifts and morphs and so do you. It’s not one or two months or years that create a life-in-balance. Rather, balance comes with that just-right-for-me harmony played over time.

Affirmation: What is right for me today? Do I need more emotional, spiritual, physical, mental, or social focus to get through this? I will listen to my needs and act accordingly.

day twenty-nine

What Story Did You Tell Today?

“Everything changes once we identify with being the witness to the story, instead of the action in it,”

~ Ram Dass

You might experience the same Zoom meet-and-greet event, be screened by the same person, or participate in the same virtual career fair today as someone else.

Yet, the stories you both tell tonight won't just be stories. How you see the day's happenings is how you experienced them.

It isn't so much the experience you have, but the story you tell about it that holds power over your days, or your months, or your years.

Different stories yield different lives.

Through what filter are you telling your stories? Interest and curiosity? Or frustration and despair?

When you change your story, you change your experience. When you change your experience, you change your results.

Affirmation: Today I will listen to the stories I tell. Then I will retell today's experience using a lens of curiosity, growth, and possibility.

day thirty

You Are that Someone

"We do not believe in ourselves until someone reveals that deep inside us something is valuable, worth listening to, worthy of our trust, sacred to our touch. Once we believe in ourselves we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight or any experience that reveals the human spirit."

~ e. e. cummings

You know it's there. You know you have something to give. You know you are special.

Sometimes others shine a light on your gifts and talents.

Sometimes you surprise yourself, catching a glimpse of what you could be or could do.

Sometimes you're waiting for someone to discover you, unearth you as the yearnings of your potential pull at your life.

Time is finite. Stop waiting.

You are that someone for your life.

Let your seed of potential become the beautiful flower that you are.

Affirmation: I will stop waiting for someone else to discover who I am. I will unleash my potential starting today. I give myself permission to shine.

30 Tips for Tapping Your Resilience

These tips are intended as a starting point as you begin moving through job loss. The ideas, thoughts, and suggestions described here will hopefully spark your inner thinking, tap into your resilience, and assist you moving forward. Be kind and patient with yourself.

TIP #1: Start a journal. This is only for you. Write whatever you feel, think, or worry about. Write whatever you're afraid of or angry about. Write anything that comes to mind. Write every morning for ten minutes. Only ten minutes. Don't reread it. Just write. Get it out of your mind.

TIP #2: Listen to what you're saying, because your words matter. The connections between your words and your results are powerful. We know about the *Little Engine that Could*. But sometimes it's more subtle. Watch for the words you use that stymie your optimism, resolve, and persistence. "Nobody's hiring," "I can't," "It's too hard right now." Talk about what you want, not what you don't.

TIP #3: Schedule focused time-blocks with yourself. Think in half-hour to hour increments. Look at your to-do list for this week and schedule self-appointments for each of your tasks. These appointments are as critical as any others on your schedule. Random time yields random results. Focused intention brings real results.

TIP #4: The 30-second pause. As you start your day, in the shower or while getting dressed, pause 30 seconds. Count them slowly. Breathe deeply as you do. Close your eyes. Picture yourself healthy and happy. Now greet this new day with that picture firmly planted in your emotional state.

TIP #5: Habits are habit-forming. After a bit of self-pity and the time to process your emotions, look carefully at yourself. Notice your daily habits. What time do you get up? Did you shower today? Are you still in your PJ's? Do you binge watch your favorite shows all afternoon or spend the day on your phone checking social media: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and repeat. Are you drinking or eating too much? Take stock. Kick out those bad habits before they settle-in.

TIP #6: Reward yourself. Whatever gets rewarded gets done, and sometimes that means you must do the rewarding to keep yourself motivated. Decide on a simple, but meaningful, reward system within your unemployed means. Big or small, take time to acknowledge your progress.

TIP #7: Once a week, change your view. It is easy to become stagnant in troubling times. Keeping in mind social distancing restrictions, take a walk, ride a bike, or go for a drive. "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others," explained Gandhi. Perhaps ordering groceries for an elderly

neighbor, organizing a food bank in your community, or ... you get the idea. When you are mired in daily life activities, adjust your surroundings, look around, be of service, and gain a fresh perspective.

TIP #8: The 10-20-30 rule. Set worry boundaries. Is it ten, twenty, or thirty minutes a day? You pick. But allow yourself no more than thirty minutes of worry-time each day. Schedule time to allow yourself to worry about whatever is most stressing. If that time is 9:00 to 9:30 p.m. and you notice yourself during the day worrying about how you're going to pay the mortgage, make your monthly utility bills, or fund your daughter's college education, defer those thoughts to your scheduled worry-time. Control your thoughts. During scheduled time, you may want to write your worries down so you're confident your thoughts are captured, or share your worries with your best friend or significant others. Worrying breeds more worrying. Limit your offspring.

TIP #9: Action squelches worries. Each week pick one worry from your worry-list and brainstorm ten actions you can do immediately to address that worry. Work through the list. Consider brainstorming with friends or family for fresh perspectives. Let's say you're worried about college tuition for your daughter next semester. Actions might include: calling the financial aid office to explore options; starting a spend-tracking system to determine what

expenses to cut; talking to your daughter about how she might help with expenses, etc. Gather ideas. Take next actions.

TIP #10: A daily dose of inspiration or a daily laugh. Just like a daily vitamin is a supplement helpful for a healthy body, a daily dose of inspiration or a good chuckle keeps your mind healthy and your thoughts moving in a positive, self-confident direction. Borrow a quotation book or find a source online for daily delivery. Read a quotation or a humor quip every morning.

TIP #11: All that you are. You are not your job or lack of it. You are not your family. You are not your body. You are not your bills. You are not your neighborhood. You are not your thoughts. You are not your past. You are more than all those things. So, who are you? What are your attributes? What are your values? What are your strengths? What is unique about you? What is your vision for your future? Take time to think about all that you are. Write it down.

TIP #12: Need or want? Take a piece of paper and make two columns: label one needs and the other wants. Now be honest with yourself. What do you need in a job? What do you want in a job? Sometimes we can have both. Sometimes we can't. Know the difference. Focus on your needs. Periodically go back through your list.

TIP #13: Define your why behind your what. What are you doing today? Why are you doing it? How does doing this thing move you toward your goals? Define the why behind the what. If you don't know why you're doing what you're doing, you're going through the motions. Be strategic.

TIP #14: Control what you can control. Don't let your lack of a job overflow to other areas of your life. When I'm out of control and stressed, my food choices suffer. But I find as soon as I start eating healthy again, I'm more in control in all parts of my life. Get the things in your life in control that you can control, and it will be easier to move through job loss. You can control expenses, amount of sleep, length of exercise, consumption of food and drink, hygiene, organization of office, time you get up, and a host of other things. Control what you can control, and you'll find yourself with renewed energy and purpose.

TIP #15: Turn them off for a day. Don't use your computer or phone today. Shut down your laptop; disable email, text messaging, browsing, app playing, or tweeting from your phone. No FaceTime or Zoom calls today. And while you're at it, turn off the TV, too. Be with yourself. Do whatever you've been wanting to do just for you. Give yourself a day to pause and reconnect, at least once a month. Keep a note pad with you to jot ideas or thoughts that pop to mind. You'll find plenty.

TIP #16: Move and learn. Listening to podcasts or audio books while exercising or driving is an excellent way to enhance your knowledge on the latest leadership theories, business ideas, or motivational techniques. At your next interview, talk about the last book you found intriguing, or the business theories or skills you're exploring. But don't stop there; set a goal of two non-fiction books a month. Choose something that motivates or challenges.

TIP #17: Operate with a safety net. Create your life-help list. These are not people to network or connect with. These are people who would be willing to help you "in case of serious emergency." Think carefully. Add people who could, and would, help you weather this storm if it worsens. Consider four categories of support: emotional, work, financial, and health/well-being. Review carefully. Eliminate those who, if you were asked for help by them, you would hesitate. Hone your list to a core group who would help "no matter what" and you would do the same for them. Don't tap this list now. But sleep well knowing you have a safety net.

TIP #18: Creatively refocus. Where else might your skills be applicable? How can you apply them or reapply them outside your previous role? Where is there a new-niche or unfilled need? Retired teachers are supporting parents' home-schooled children. Distilleries are making hand-sanitizers. High school students are creating face shields using 3-D printers. And, college students

created The FarmLink Project connecting farmers with canceled restaurant contracts with food banks. Creativity is contagious.

TIP #19: Chunk it. Finish college degree. Find job. Resolve finances. These aren't doable chunks. They are goals or objectives or buckets and can seem overwhelming. Divide them into smaller chunks by brainstorming each bucket-goal. Then, divide your list into smaller and smaller tasks. Your first chunk for "find a job" isn't updating your resume. That's a larger task on your bucket-goal list of "find job." Your first chunk is more like: take a fresh look at your accomplishments, skills, and knowledge. How can you write an effective resume or cover letter unless you define the value you can bring to a company?

TIP #20: Travel light into your future. There are boxes full of "stuff" you don't need. Old papers and mementos from previous jobs, outgrown or out-of-style clothes, miscellaneous clutter in closets, attics, and garages. Eliminate physical baggage from your past as a symbol and catalyst for building a path to your future.

TIP #21: Make progress, any progress. Pick something each week on your to-do list that has nothing to do with job hunting. Maybe it's cleaning the basement, kitchen cabinets, or crammed junk drawer. Whatever it is, devote two hours a week to doing it until you have it completed. Then cross it off your list and move to

the next item. Completing tasks will provide ongoing accomplishment and increase your determination.

TIP #22: Don't get stuck in permanent. Nothing is permanent. Everything changes. So don't think the next job you get has to be the job to end all jobs. It may be a steppingstone to a dream job, a way to keep you financially afloat in the short-term, or a step backwards to eventually take two steps forward. But it may not be permanent. It's a place to start building the future you desire.

TIP #23: See the world anew. Never listened to an audio book, read a mystery or planted a garden? Always gravitate to the same websites, read the same apps, or cook the same foods? Venture out. Drive back roads to the store, take an online class you never imagined, or learn a musical instrument. You can't move through job loss, create new learning pathways, make new connections, or notice hidden opportunities unless you replenish your soul and grow new eyes along the way.

TIP #24: Time for play. Think of it as a well-deserved recess, refueling creativity, or cleansing your mind. Think of it as renewing your energy, enhancing your well-being, or getting refocused. However, you think of it, do it. You need downtime. You need play. You need fun. You need to recharge creative juices and renew your determination. So, whether watching a movie in your favorite genre, playing basketball, or a virtual lunch with special friends is your

desire, have play-time every week. Schedule something now you can look forward to this week.

TIP #25: Get lost in a good novel. Sometimes the best strategy is pursuing alternative thinking paths. Fiction can do that. Find a book that grips you and devour it. These hours of refreshed perspective can spark new ideas, renew your spirit, and open your thinking.

TIP #26: Experience nature. Being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature, can reduce anger, fear, and stress, as well as increase positive feelings. Exposure to nature not only makes you feel better emotionally, it contributes to physical wellbeing, reducing blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension. If you can't experience nature first-hand, many national parks, museums, zoos and botanical gardens offer virtual tours. Find a natural setting to retreat to when you're feeling stressed.

TIP #27: Learn to like roller coasters. Up and down and all around. Backward and forward and loop-de-loop. Some would say it's all in how you take your ride. You can take it screaming or laughing. It's yours. Life is a process of self-discovery. Use this experience to uncover more about who you are at the core, the resilient strengths you possess, and what matters to you. Grow knowledge about yourself.

TIP #28: Monitor your whine-factor. Yes, there's plenty to whine about, but it's not going to help you get through this after a few weeks. Listen for your whines. Step outside yourself and listen to what you're saying. It's time to change your message.

TIP #29: Kindness matters. It's not a picnic for your family or friends either. They know you're upset, angry, frustrated, or discouraged. They see the sadness behind your eyes, the worry in your face. You don't mean to take it out on them, but you might be doing just that. These are the people who most matter in your life, who sustain you through tough times, who love you. Thank them, appreciate them, and love them. They're worried, frightened, upset and troubled, too. Weather these storms and troubling times together.

TIP #30: There will be days. Persistent determination in the face of hardship, loss, change, and struggle is difficult at best, challenging always, and emotionally draining. There will be days when the world seems bleak, dark, and overwhelming. It happens to all of us. These are the days when a plaque in my office holds the best wisdom I know. It reads: "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'" After all, that's the key to moving through job loss. Never give up on yourself, your future, or your dreams.

Now What? – Next Actions

Tapping inner strength and resilience, especially in challenging times, is not a one and done. It's like exercise. The more you do, the more it helps, and the more it helps, the more you like it, and the more you like it, the more you do it. Reflective thinking and inner work are like that, too.

But tangible progress is essential. And while this is not a how-to find a job resource, there are a few next actions we recommend as a place to start:

- ❖ **Tell everyone.** Tell your friend, your family, your neighbors, and everyone else you know that you're actively in the job market. You never know who may have a lead or contact.
- ❖ **Join the 21st-century.** Whether you're 27 or 57, this is the perfect time to update your skills. Take inventory. What's missing in your skill set? Work on its development.
- ❖ **Be a joiner.** If you're not a member of a professional organization or service organization, find one or two to join.
- ❖ **You have a job.** Your current job is finding a job; approach it with the same determination, dedication, time, and intensity that you would any job.
- ❖ **Differential yourself.** If there are certifications, additional licenses, or professional designations for your profession, this is a good time to renew or increase yours.
- ❖ **Keep your distance from energy-drainers.** Spend more time with people who cheer you on, encourage you, inspire you.
- ❖ **Check out job-hunt.org.** A site to discover up-to-date job-hunting advice, resources, experts, and information

About the Author – Nan S. Russell

Nan left the east coast corporate world to pursue her dream to launch a **second-act career** writing from the Rocky Mountains. Today, she is the author of five books, and works nationally with organizations to build winning cultures, and with individuals to realize their dreams and live their life's potential.

Her **first-act career** involved 20 years in management, including executive positions in human resources, communication, marketing, and line management. She has a B.A. from Stanford University in Psychology; a M.A. from the University of Michigan.

Nan learned early a Stanford education would not protect her from job loss. Fired from her first professional position, her career followed a winding path from minimum wage employee to Vice President of a multi-billion-dollar company, in roles transforming a corporate culture of 10,000 to heading a new subsidiary.

During the Great Recession, Nan wrote *NEXT! Rebooting After Job Loss*, the foundational material for a seminar she designed and taught during that time. When the 2020 Pandemic and its unemployment toll hit, she decided to write, *Moving Through Job Loss*.

Books by Nan S. Russell

- *It's Not About Time*
- *The Titleless Leader*
- *Trust, Inc.*
- *Hitting Your Stride*
- *Nibble Your Way to Success*

Currently, Nan is working toward her next dream: a **third-act career** as a mystery writer.

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