



WORK AND MONEY

## What I Learned From Getting Laid Off

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Last year, I entered my dream job's conference room, expecting to discuss social media strategy. Twenty minutes later, I was unexpectedly faced with the knowledge that my department was being shut down and I had 30 days left in my role.

There's no getting around it: Getting laid off is not fun. The 30 days that followed my notice and the subsequent months of unemployment to come were simultaneously stressful, tearful, shameful, and enraging.

While I would never wish a layoff on anyone, it's increasingly common during this time — and shockingly, more often than not, a gift in disguise.

Here's why.

## **Getting laid off teaches you to be smarter with money.**

After years of not-so-subtle encouragement from my family, I finally started to save last year. While it was just small amounts here or there, I was thankful I had cash in the bank to keep me comfortable for a few months. However, I simultaneously knew I could have had more in the reserves that I had blown on ultimately frivolous purchases that did not spark joy (hello, Marie Kondo!) in the long term. Unexpected life events like a layoff can teach you invaluable lessons about the importance of a robust savings account and an intentional financial plan that accounts for crises both big and small.

## **Some of us idealize our 'dream jobs.'**

Similar to a toxic relationship, I continued to tell myself that I loved my job. Meanwhile, it was clear to my loved ones that I was struggling (think: **The Devil Wears Prada**). When this "breakup" blindsided me, I continued to defend my position, but the further I distanced myself from my job, the clearer it became that I was unhappy and clinging on to a rosy expectation versus facing reality. Coming to terms with the reality of the situation after a separation can help you define what you want and what will lead to true satisfaction and happiness in your next role. Once these ideas — from office culture to your job responsibilities — are defined, the job hunt is more thoughtful and likely to lead to your actual dream role.

## **You can explore your true passions with a fresh slate.**

While I thrive on a traditional schedule, the sudden jolt out of this routine gave me time to pursue hobbies I didn't otherwise have time for, as well as time to explore new interests. I experimented with creative ventures, I wrote and read fiction and nonfiction, and I spent evenings experimenting with new recipes. Without the pressure of a tight schedule, you're free for the first time in years to return to trial and error and the childlike awe of new discoveries. By the time you return to work, you'll likely have an even clearer, more defined vision of your true passions.

## **Identity is defined outside of a career.**

My career is a large part of both who I am and where I see myself in the future. So, when I temporarily lost my position, I began to question my identity. However, it served as a much needed reminder: We are not just one thing, we are multifaceted. I used the time off to explore, develop, and put in hard work toward other facets of my identity that work in conjunction with my role as a professional — a friend, a partner, a daughter, a sister, a home chef, a bookworm, a cat mom, and everything in between. Self-worth and identity do not lie in one part of your life alone.

Have you ever been laid off? What did you learn?