

When the bottom drops out of your career

Q: “My life at work has become unbearable. Two years ago, my immediate boss, with whom I had a great relationship, was forced to resign. Shortly thereafter, I had a serious conflict with a female colleague who was extremely close to our department vice president. After that incident, my career went downhill, although I had previously received high performance ratings and a promotion.

“I began to look for another job, but the economy took a nosedive and my wife was diagnosed with cancer, so leaving was completely out of the question. Now my wife is well again, and the economy has improved. But after having my self-esteem pounded on a daily basis, I no longer feel confident that anyone will hire me.

“I feel completely powerless to change this situation. I can’t even bring myself to update my résumé. When I come home from work, I just eat dinner and go to bed, dreading the next day. Can you offer any advice?”

Hopeless

A: Given the recent turmoil in your life, it’s no wonder you’re feeling emotionally paralyzed. Sadly, this job is draining you of the very energy required to escape it. To turn things around, you must either engage in some do-it-yourself rehabilitation or seek out professional help.

First, try to recognize that this is not the end of the world, but just a temporary pothole on your career path. If you can view your current circumstances as transitory, you may begin to feel more hopeful.

Next, take one small step towards finding another job. Depression may drain you of the energy for action, but the reverse is also true: action can begin to lessen your depression. You might look at career websites, buy a book on job search skills, join a professional association, or call your former boss. After accomplishing that initial step, take another one. And then another.

Finally, instead of turning in early, go for a walk or hop on a treadmill. Research has clearly shown that exercise is an antidote for depression, even though it’s often the last thing depressed people want to do.

If taking these steps seems impossible, consider consulting a qualified mental health professional. To regain control of your career, you must first get control of your emotions.

At some point, everyone has to deal with stress at work. Here are some coping tips: [How to Stress Less at Work](#).