

TIPS FOR WORK TRANSITIONS

-NEWLY UNEMPLOYED

This Tip Sheet was developed for AOTA by Dr. Karen Jacobs, EdD, CPE, OTR/L, FAOTA and Dr. Lynn Shaw, PhD, OT Reg. (Ont.)



“Occupational therapy practitioners can provide support ... for workers and families and promote the process of regaining employment.”

Engagement in meaningful and productive employment is important to health and ability to participate fully in everyday life. Work provides structure to daily routines and provides support for people to achieve their potential. Work also meets the basic financial needs to enable full participation. When a person experiences unexpected and unplanned job loss or loss of work, the physical health, emotional health and general well-being of the worker and their entire family is affected.

Loss of work has a cascading effect, disrupting daily routines, causing financial instability, weakening social connections,

and diminishes self worth by erasing a person's work identity. Becoming unemployed begins a time period of uncertainty and change. It affects both men and women of all races, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Increased stress, anxiety and worrying about the ability to manage present difficulties and cope with the future unknowns can be overwhelming. But there are answers.

Occupational therapy practitioners can provide support during this transition for workers and families and promote the process of regaining employment.

What can an occupational therapy practitioner do?

- **Recognize** the realm and unique extent of the losses for each worker and family.
- **Recognize** the health and well-being needs of the family as well as the worker that must be met during the transition back to work.
- **Provide strategies** to enable and sustain daily routines of self and family.
- **Provide strategies** to plan and manage time of self and family.
- **Provide mental health screening** including for depression.
- **Encourage** worker participation in planning and management of work transition strategies.
- **Encourage** worker reflection on and self-awareness of the impact of the loss to enable the identification of appropriate and useful stress management strategies.
- **Encourage** employment goal setting through active consideration of the relevance and meaning of work, work capacities and future potentials.
- **Encourage** work resumption strategies such as developing new skills, networking skills, getting retraining and volunteering.
- **Encourage** worker participation in knowledge exchange and social support with peers.
- **Encourage** and create opportunities for worker networking and knowledge exchange.
- **Encourage** worker in recreating a new worker identity.

What can the worker do?

- **Take time for self care** as work transitions are physically and emotionally fatiguing.
- **Plan to go for daily walks** or establish a physical exercise routine.
- **Consider potential short-term employment** or volunteer opportunities.
- **Talk and share with family** to involve them in managing daily life and planning for finding employment.
- **Talk with others who have lost work** and exchange strategies that help to cope and find work.
- **Network with family and friends** and establish new connections.
- **Share with others** your goals for work.
- **Find a mentor** and ask them for feedback about your transition plans.
- **Be involved in finding and sharing information** and thinking about which information is relevant to you.
- **Contact your local employment agencies.**

For more information, contact the American Occupational Therapy Association, the professional society of occupational therapy, representing nearly 36,000 occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and students working in practice, science, education, and research.

The American Occupational Therapy Association
4720 Montgomery Lane
Bethesda, MD 20814-3425
301-652-AOTA (2682)
www.aota.org ■ www.OTConnections.org ■ store.aota.org

Occupational Therapy: Living Life To Its Fullest

Copyright © 2009 by the American Occupational Therapy Association. All rights reserved. This material may be copied and distributed without prior written consent. For all other uses, please e-mail praota@aota.org.