laid off, not lost

**A Bold & Practical Guide to Reclaiming Your Career**

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**Introduction**

***You’re Not Broken. You’re in Transition.***

Let’s be clear about one thing: getting laid off says nothing about your intelligence, your worth, or your future. It’s a moment — not your identity. And though it can knock the wind out of you, it can also be a portal to something stronger, better aligned, and more sustainable.

This guide is here to walk with you. Whether you’re feeling fired up to pivot or still nursing the sting, there’s no wrong place to begin. Use this guide as both a grounding presence and a launch pad. You don’t need to rush. You just need to move intentionally.

**Phase 1:**

***Breathe. Feel. Process.***

Before you revise your resume or fire off job applications, pause. Losing a job deserves space to grieve, rest and rejuvenate.

Take time to identify and honor your feelings. Are you angry? Ashamed? Relieved? Anxious? Maybe all of the above. This is not a detour; it’s part of the path.

What you resist will persist, but what you process can transform.

**Quick Practice:**

Set a timer for 15 minutes. Free-write in response to these prompts:

* What did I gain in my last role?
* What did I lose?
* What do I need now?

There’s no need to rush toward productivity. Feeling is the first step toward clarity.

**Phase 2:**

***Audit Your Assets***

This is where you take inventory—not just of your resume, but of your resources, energy, and needs.

**Career Inventory**

* What did you enjoy most in your previous roles?
* What do people consistently come to you for?
* What skills are transferable across industries?
* What are your non-negotiables going forward?

**Financial Reality Check**

* What’s your current runway (severance, savings, unemployment eligibility)?
* What expenses can be paused, renegotiated, or eliminated?
* What’s your minimum viable budget for the next 3 to 6 months?

**Mental and Emotional Health**

* How are you sleeping?
* Who are you talking to about what you’re going through?
* What helps you regulate stress—movement, prayer, journaling, therapy?

**Phase 3:**

***Reinvent, Don’t Retreat***

This is not the time to shrink into survival mode. It’s the time to ask:

*What do I want next?*

Not *what can I get*, but *what would be worthy of me?*

Update how you describe yourself. You are not “currently unemployed.” You are “exploring new opportunities” or “in a career transition focused on greater alignment.” Language matters.

Rethink how your experience positions you. Maybe this is the moment to go freelance, take on fractional work, pursue contract opportunities, or even launch that consulting business you’ve been thinking about.

Be open to evolution. You are not starting from scratch; you’re starting from experience.

**Phase 4:**

***Reconnect and Rebuild Your Network***

It can feel intimidating to reach out after a layoff. But remember no matter how good your resume is, people help people. Your next opportunity will likely come through a conversation, not a job board.

Start by letting people know you’re in transition and open to opportunities. This isn’t a plea for help—it’s an invitation to collaborate, support, and share.

**Sample Message:**

*“Hi [Name], I wanted to share that I’m in a period of career transition after my recent role was impacted. I’m using this as a chance to realign with the kind of work that lights me up. I’d love to connect and hear how things are going on your end.”*

Make it relational, not transactional. Aim for 3–5 networking touchpoints per week. Keep notes, follow up, and remember: consistency builds momentum.

**Phase 5:**

***Pitch Yourself Like a Boss***

Your story matters—and you get to decide how to tell it. Avoid framing the layoff as a failure. Instead, name it confidently and pivot toward your goals.

For example:

*“My role was impacted as part of a broader restructuring. It gave me the space to step back and clarify the kind of work I want to pursue—work that’s more values-aligned and growth-oriented.”*

Revamp your resume and LinkedIn to reflect your most relevant wins and future direction. Think in headlines, not history. What’s your unique value proposition?

Get clear on how to answer:

* Why are you looking now?
* What kind of roles are you pursuing?
* How are you different from other candidates?

Prepare 2–3 strong stories using the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to highlight your wins. Practice in front of a mirror or with a friend until your confidence returns.

**Phase 6:**

***Make the Money Make Sense***

A layoff often causes a financial ripple effect, but you can stabilize the situation by acting early and making informed decisions.

**Benefits to Research Immediately:**

* Unemployment Insurance
* COBRA or ACA Health Coverage
* Severance Package Terms
* 401(k) Rollover Options

**Budgeting Tips:**

* Cut expenses where possible—but do it proactively, not fearfully
* Use budgeting tools or spreadsheets to track expenses
* Adjust your plan every 2–4 weeks as your circumstances evolve

This is a reset, not a punishment. You are allowed to rebuild on your terms.

**Phase 7:**

***Build Your Comeback Plan***

**Sample 8-Week Recovery Plan:**

Weeks 1–2:

* Process emotions
* Journal and reflect
* Assess finances

Weeks 3–4:

* Update resume and LinkedIn
* Reconnect with old colleagues and mentors
* Explore new industries or freelance options

Weeks 5–6:

* Actively apply for roles
* Attend networking events
* Practice interviewing

Weeks 7–8:

* Negotiate offers
* Finalize next role
* Create a development plan for your next chapter

Progress isn’t linear. What matters is that you’re moving forward with intention.

**BONUS TOOLS & RESOURCES**

***Layoff Email Notification Templates***

**To Former Colleagues:**

Subject: Quick Update and Gratitude

Hi [Name],

I wanted to share that my position was recently impacted as part of a company-wide restructuring. While the news was unexpected, I’m grateful for the time I had working with an amazing team.

I’m currently exploring new opportunities and reconnecting with folks whose work I admire. If you hear of anything that aligns with [brief mention of desired role or field], I’d truly appreciate a referral or introduction.

Thanks again for everything — I’d love to stay in touch.

Warmly,  
[Your Name]

**To Request an Informational Interview:**

Subject: Request to Reconnect and Learn

Hi [Name],

I hope you’re doing well. I’m currently in a season of career transition after my role was eliminated in a recent restructure. I’ve always admired your path, and I’d love to hear more about your experience in [industry/role].

Would you be open to a brief virtual coffee chat in the next couple of weeks? I’m gathering insights as I plan my next move and would value your perspective.

Let me know what works best for you.

Best,  
[Your Name]

***Unemployment Application Checklist***

**What You’ll Need:**

* SSN
* Government-issued ID
* Employer name/address
* Final pay date
* Separation reason: “Laid off due to restructuring”
* Severance info (if applicable)
* Direct deposit info

**Steps to Take:**

1. Go to your state’s unemployment website
2. Create an account and apply
3. Submit weekly certifications
4. Track approval and payment status
5. Report any freelance income honestly

***Weekly Networking Tracker***

| **Name** | **Company** | **Role** | **Contact Date** | **Follow-Up Needed** | **Notes/**  **Outcome** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Jane Smith | Beacon Media | VP Marketing | 4/15 | Yes | Suggested I connect with hiring mgr |
| Alex Kumar | Freelance | Brand Coach | 4/17 | No | Offered feedback on pitch |
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Use this to track your progress and stay consistent.

***Budget Spreadsheet Template***

| **Category** | **Must Have** | **Nice to Have** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rent/Mortgage | $ |  |  |
| Utilities | $ |  |  |
| Phone/Internet | $ |  |  |
| Groceries | $ |  |  |
| Subscriptions |  | $ | Review for cancellation |
| Transportation | $ |  | Gas, Metro, Ride Shares |
| Emergency Savings |  | $ | Optional during layoff |

**Track Income Sources:**

* Unemployment
* Severance
* Freelance
* Investments
* Gifts/Support

***LinkedIn Profile Revamp Worksheet***

**Headline Formula:**

[Role] | [Impact or Specialty] | [Goal]  
Example: Digital Marketer | Audience Growth Strategist | Open to Contract Roles

**About Section Prompts:**

* What problems do you solve?
* What lights you up?
* What industries do you want to work in?
* What proof do you have of your results?

**Checklist:**

* Update headline
* Rewrite summary
* Add 3+ updated bullet points per role
* Showcase work in Featured section
* Add “Open to Work” tag (if desired)

***Mental Health Resource Guide***

**Free or Low-Cost Resources:**

* Open Path Collective
* Therapy for Black Girls / Therapy for Black Men
* 7 Cups (online peer support)
* Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741741

**Grounding Practices:**

* Journaling prompt: “What am I still holding onto from my last job?”
* 5-4-3-2-1 sensory grounding exercise
* Walk outside for 10 minutes daily
* Sleep hygiene check: no screens 30 min before bed

***Resume + Cover Letter Templates***

**Resume Tips:**

* Keep it to 1–2 pages
* Use action verbs
* Quantify outcomes
* Use hybrid format if pivoting industries

**Cover Letter Template:**

Dear [Hiring Manager’s Name],

I’m writing to express interest in the [Job Title] position at [Company Name]. With a background in [relevant function or industry] and a passion for [mission or skill], I believe I bring the right mix of experience and fresh perspective to your team.

After a recent company restructuring, I’ve taken time to reflect and realign my career around opportunities where I can create impact through [core skill or goal].

I would love the opportunity to speak with you about how I can contribute to your organization.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]

**Final Words:**

***You’re Not Starting Over. You’re Starting Smarter.***

You’re not behind. You’re not broken. You’re not alone.

This season is not a dead end. It’s a turning point. Let this guide be the proof that you didn’t just survive a layoff.

You are not rebuilding your old life. You are designing your next one — and you don’t have to do it alone.

Use this experience to reclaim your story, your strength, and your direction.

**Turn the Layoff to Your Launchpad**

At scrappy girl project we specialize in turning setbacks into strategy.

If you're ready to move from uncertainty to alignment, from layoff to leadership, we’re here to help.

Whether you need 1:1 strategy, career clarity, or a powerful plan forward—this is your invitation to rebuild boldly.

**Book a Power Hour or explore one of The Quantum Lead® programs for support at** [**here**](https://scrappygirlproject.com/leadership).