



# Re-Engaging Long Term Unemployed Jobseekers Who Have Quietly Given Up

RECORDED SESSION

*Understanding Why Clients Withdraw and How to Rebuild Engagement*

Fri, July 10, 2026 | 10 AM PDT (1 hour session)

Presenter:

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# Session Agenda

RECORDED SESSION

- Understanding Why Clients Quietly Disengage
- Rebuilding Autonomy, Confidence and Labor Market Momentum
- Supporting Meaningful Client Re-Engagement
- Practice Lab: Applying Strategies to a Client Scenario
- Question & Answer Session



**Slides and a Session  
Recording link will be  
available after the session  
via email**

# Understanding Why Clients Quietly Disengage



# Understanding Why Clients Quietly Disengage

Before we discuss how to re-engage clients, let's first understand **why** many long-term unemployed clients gradually disengage from the job search process.

Many clients do not suddenly stop looking for work, instead engagement often ***changes over time***.

***What are some indicators?***



# Understanding Why Clients Quietly Disengage

## Common indicators:

- Reduced communication
- Less participation during appointments
- Missed or cancelled appointments
- Withdrawing from job search activities, workshops, events, job development services or other supports
- Difficulty making decisions or committing to next steps



# Looking Beyond Behaviour

| We may see...                                                                                                                                        | The client may be experiencing...                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Missed appointments                                                |  Emotional exhaustion   |
|  Little progress                                                    |  Loss of confidence     |
|  Minimal participation                                              |  Feeling overwhelmed    |
|  Avoidance                                                          |  Fear of more rejection |
|  "I'm fine."                                                       |  Protective withdrawal |
|  Behaviour is often the visible symptom—not the underlying cause. |                                                                                                          |



# Understanding Why Clients Quietly Disengage

Many long-term unemployed clients experience:

- Repeated rejection
- Reduced sense of control
- Ongoing stress and uncertainty
- Anticipated failure

These experiences can gradually affect ***motivation, confidence and behavior.***



# Motivation Theory: Learned Helplessness

## Martin Seligman's Learned Helplessness Theory

<https://dictionary.apa.org/learned-helplessness>

Repeated unsuccessful experiences and uncontrollable negative events can **reduce** a person's belief that their actions will influence future outcomes.

Instead of trying harder, some people begin to withdraw as a way of **protecting themselves** from further disappointment.



**Martin Seligman**  
(1942–)

Martin Seligman is an American psychologist, best known for his research on learned helplessness, optimism, and positive psychology.

**Key Contribution:** Developed the theory of learned helplessness, which explains how repeated exposure to uncontrollable negative events can lead individuals to believe they have no control over outcomes.

**Source:**



American Psychological Association.  
(n.d.). Learned helplessness.  
APA Dictionary of Psychology.  
<https://dictionary.apa.org/learned-helplessness>

# Motivation Theory: Learned Helplessness

## Martin Seligman's Learned Helplessness Theory

Clients may begin to think:

- "Why bother?"
- "Nothing I do makes a difference."
- "I'll probably be rejected again."



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# Basic Brain Science: Cognitive Load

## John Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/cognitive-load-theory>

In our context, we know that long-term unemployment often creates competing demands and ongoing stress.

Prolonged unemployment often brings:

- Financial stress and ongoing uncertainty
- Repeated decision-making and constant rejection



**John Sweller**  
(1931–2019)

John Sweller was an Australian educational psychologist who developed Cognitive Load Theory.

**Key Contribution:** Developed Cognitive Load Theory, which explains how the amount of information a person is processing can affect learning, decision-making, and problem-solving.

**Source:**



ScienceDirect

Elsevier. (n.d.). Cognitive load theory. ScienceDirect Topics.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/cognitive-load-theory>

# Basic Brain Science: Cognitive Load

## John Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory

His theory explains that as cognitive load increases, people may experience:

- Mental fatigue and difficulty planning
- Reduced concentration and feeling overwhelmed
- Avoidance of complex tasks

***Clients may struggle to take action because they are cognitively overloaded—not because they lack motivation.***



**John Sweller**  
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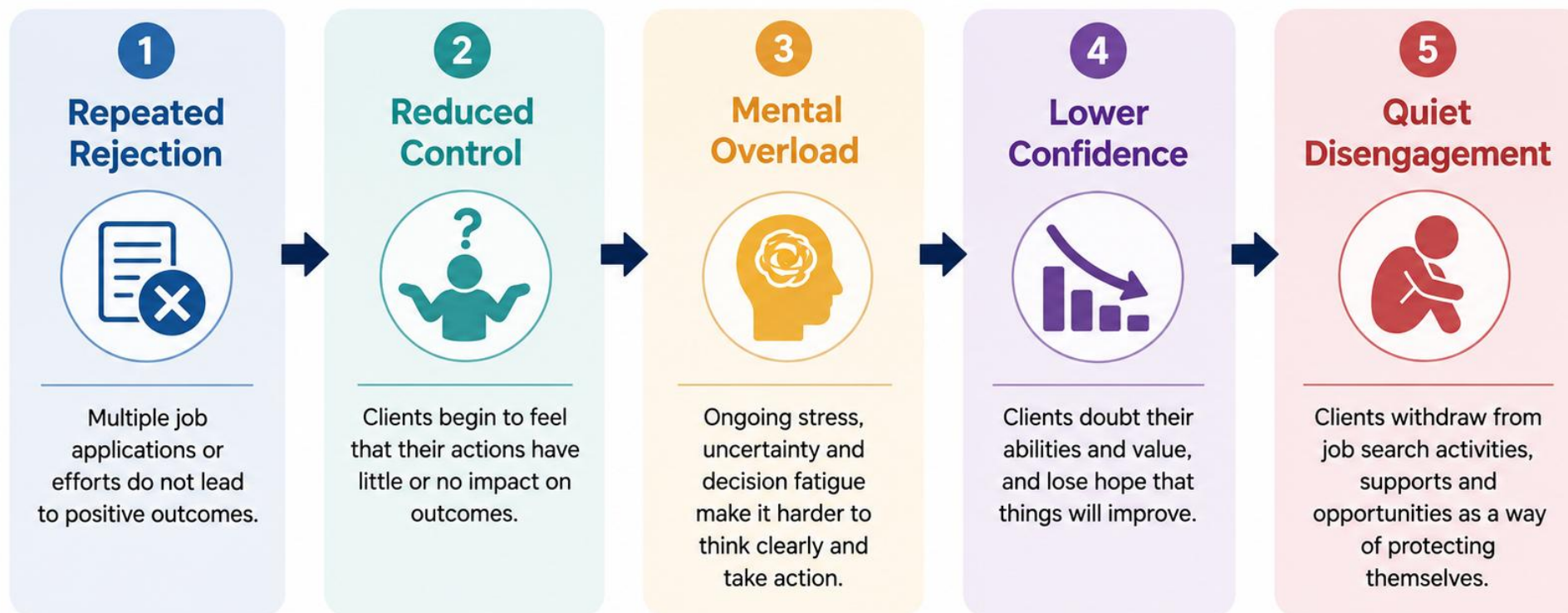


ScienceDirect

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# The Disengagement Pathway



*Understanding this pathway helps us respond with empathy and use strategies that support re-engagement.*

# Rebuilding Autonomy, Confidence and Labor Market Momentum



# Rebuilding Autonomy, Confidence and Labor Market Momentum

From what we know about client disengagement, Career Practitioners can help rebuild in 3 key areas:

- Autonomy "I have some choice and control."
- Confidence "I believe I can succeed."
- Labor Market Momentum "I can make meaningful progress toward employment."



# ● Rebuilding Autonomy (Structured)

Clients who feel they have little control are more likely to engage when they feel they have ***ownership over the process***.

- Involve clients in decisions about how they would like to receive support (e.g., in-person appointments, phone calls or virtual meetings i.e., 2-way communication methods only).
- Offer clients 2 or 3 meaningful options throughout the counselling process, allowing them to make decisions easily
- Co-create shorter-term goals rather than prescribing tasks or timelines (next 3 weeks, next 2 months etc.)



# Rebuilding Confidence

Repeated setbacks can reduce confidence, making future action feel risky. Confidence grows through ***successful experiences***.

- Highlight evidence of progress (milestones), i.e., increased interviews, stronger interview skills, challenges overcome or expanded professional networks.
- Normalize setbacks by discussing labor market realities; unsuccessful applications are a common part of job search.
- Help clients recognize strengths they may have overlooked by reflecting on examples you've observed during discussions.



# Rebuilding Confidence (continued)

## The Power of Supportive Language

Try saying :

- I can see the effort you've been putting in, even if the results haven't been what you hoped.
- Given everything you've been through, your reaction makes sense.
- What do you feel you're already doing well?
- Can you think of a time when you successfully worked through a similar challenge?



# Rebuilding Labour Market Momentum

Clients who quietly disengage often become *disconnected from the labor market itself* - not just from employment services.

- Review one new job posting, industry article or employer together at each appointment
- Set one specific labor market activity to complete before the next appointment
- Ask client to reach out to one professional contact to rebuild networking confidence



# Supporting Meaningful Client Re-Engagement



# Supporting Meaningful Client Re-Engagement

As we have reviewed rebuilding autonomy, confidence and labor market momentum, how do we translate those concepts into everyday practice?

## Practical Re-Engagement Strategies:

- 📩 Initial Low-Pressure Outreach
- 💻 Small Digital Touchpoints
- 🤝 Rebuilding Connection Through Meaningful Conversations
- 🎯 Micro Re-Engagement Activities
- 🎲 Breaking Routine Through Creative Engagement

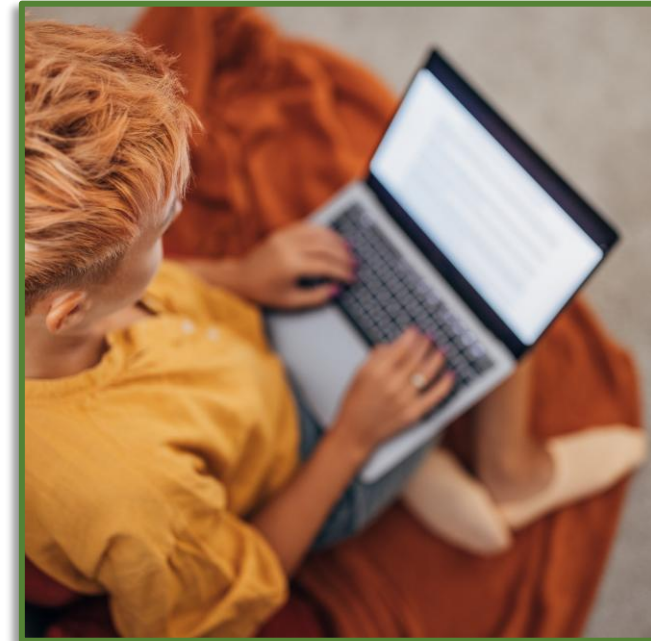


# 1. Initial Low-Pressure Outreach

*Many clients who have quietly disengaged expect criticism, disappointment or pressure when they hear from their Career Practitioner.*

Instead:

- Brief check-in emails or supportive text messages
- Let clients know there is no expectation to explain their absence or catch up all at once
- Offer flexible ways to reconnect (phone call, virtual meeting, in-person appointment or a brief email reply)



## 2. Small Digital Touchpoints

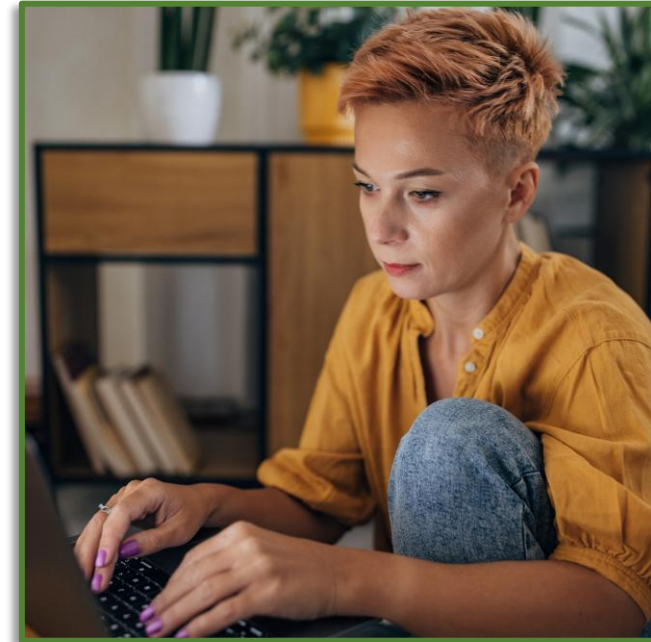
Keep clients connected between appointments by providing brief interactions that reinforces progress and keeps the job search visible without creating additional pressure.

### 💡 Career Reflection Prompts

Ask one short question that encourages thinking rather than a lengthy response.

"Which job posting interested you most this week?"

"What's one strength you'd like practice highlighting in your next interview?"



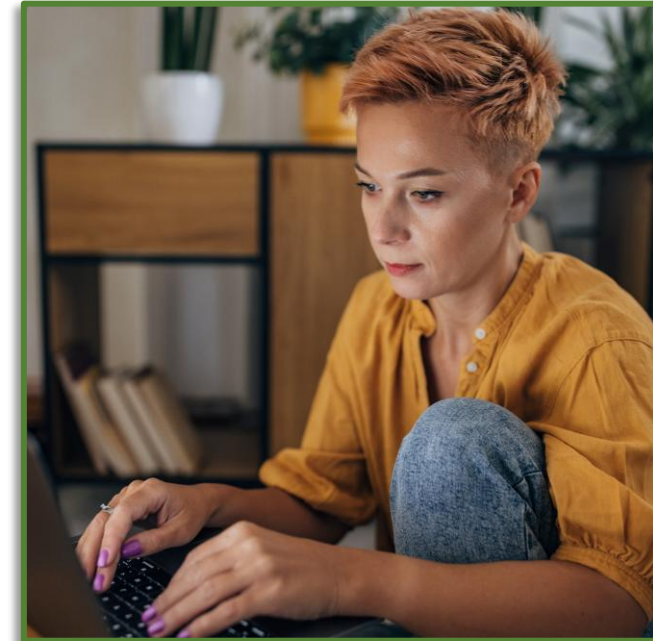
## 2. Small Digital Touchpoints

### Targeted Learning Resources

Share one short article, 5-minute video or career resource directly related to the client's goals or current challenge.

### Micro Career Exploration

Encourage one small exploration activity, such as researching one employer, comparing two occupations or reviewing one company's careers page.



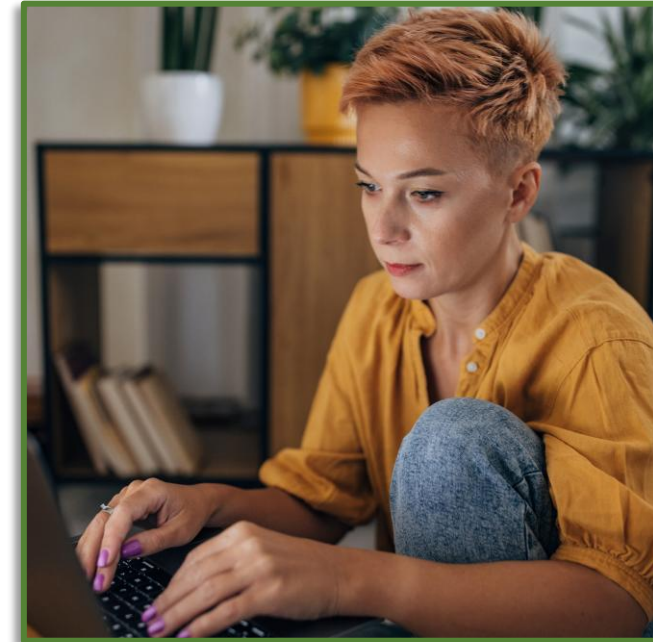
## 2. Small Digital Touchpoints

### AI Job Search Activities

Send one AI prompt to help with a specific task, such as brainstorming transferable skills, tailoring a cover letter or preparing for a difficult question during an interview.

#### ***Example Prompt:***

“I resigned from my previous position as a Marketing Manager and have been unemployed for approximately nine months now. I would like to practice answering why I left my last job. Please act as an experienced interviewer. Ask me the question, wait for my response, then evaluate my answer from an employer's perspective.” <https://chatgpt.com/share/6a505429-21b0-83e8-9082-b965f2f87725>



### 3. Rebuilding Connection Through Meaningful Conversations

Clients don't need another reminder to apply for jobs - they need to feel heard, understood and genuinely supported. Shift from task-focused appointments to *deeper conversations*.

- Spend more time exploring the client's current experience before discussing job search activities.
- Use open-ended questions that encourage reflection rather than yes/no responses.
- Acknowledge emotions without immediately trying to solve the problem.

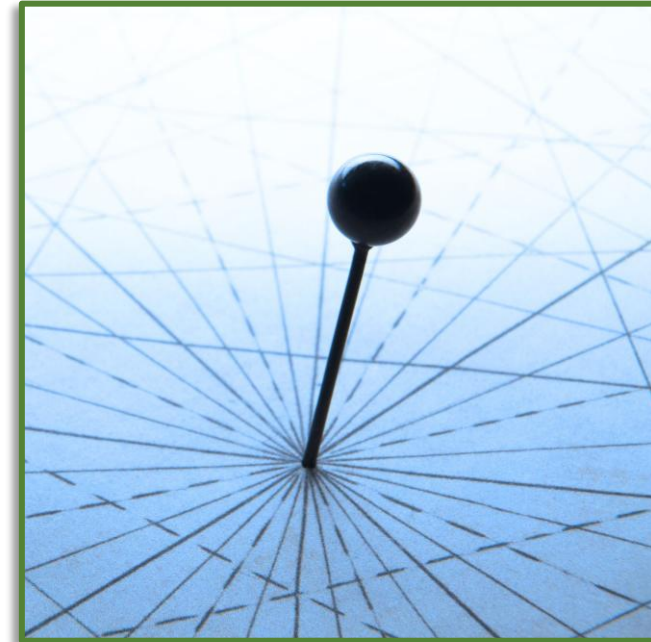


## 4. Micro Re-Engagement Activities

Micro re-engagement activities reduce cognitive load by focusing on one small, achievable task that helps rebuild confidence and labor market momentum - begin with one achievable action.

### Labor Market Exploration

- Research one employer
- Save three interesting online job postings
- Compare two occupations of interest (use NOC codes)



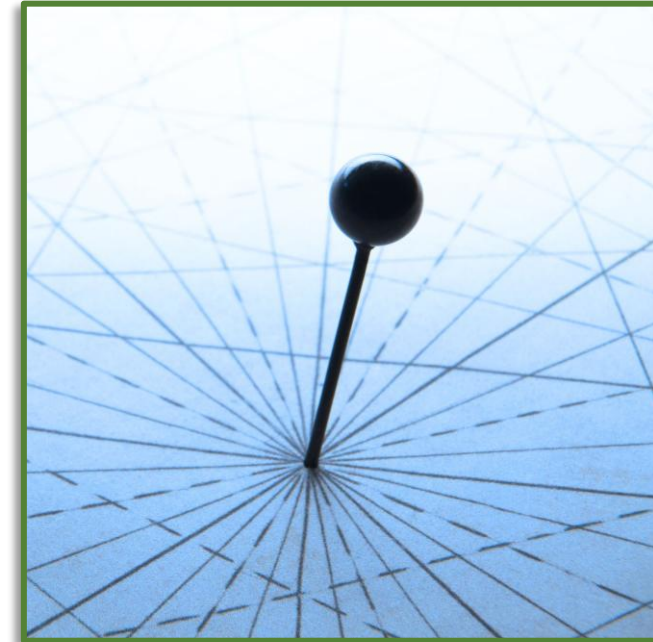
# 4. Micro Re-Engagement Activities

## Interview Preparation

- Practice answering one interview question
- Record one short practice response
- Develop a list of approaches for salary negotiation

## AI-Assisted Activities

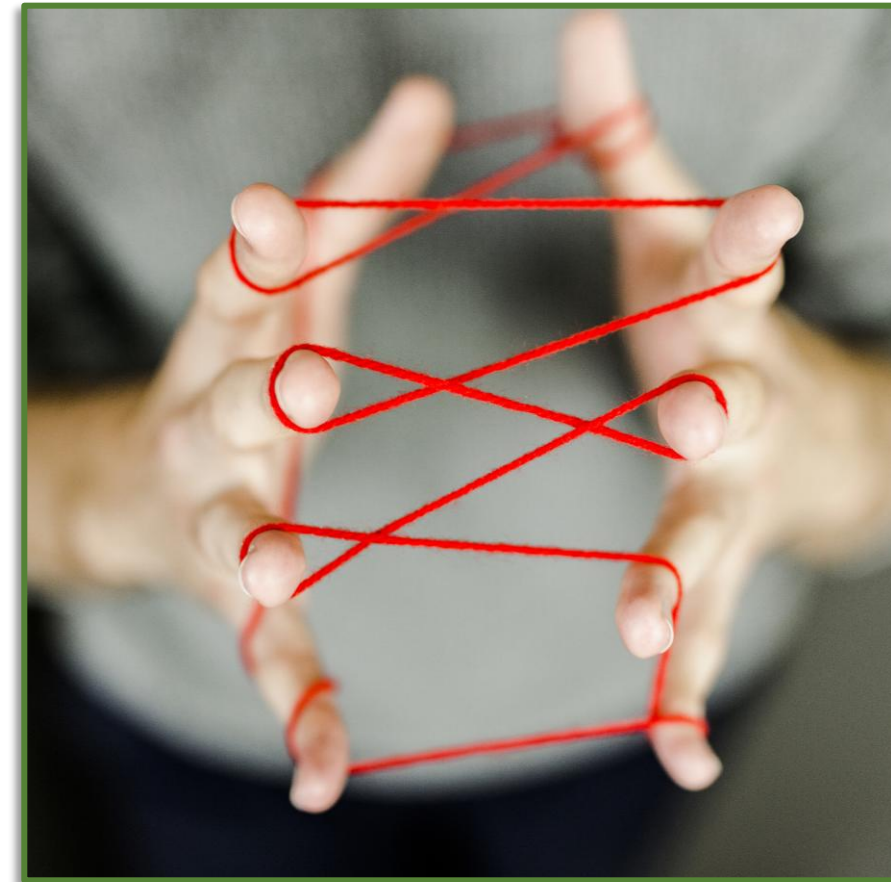
- Use AI to role-play a mock interview with a specific employer
- Compare resume against a specific job posting for ATS matching
- Brainstorm alternative career pathways



## 5. Breaking Routine Through Creative Engagement

When traditional strategies begin to lose their impact, consider ***changing how clients experience employment services.***

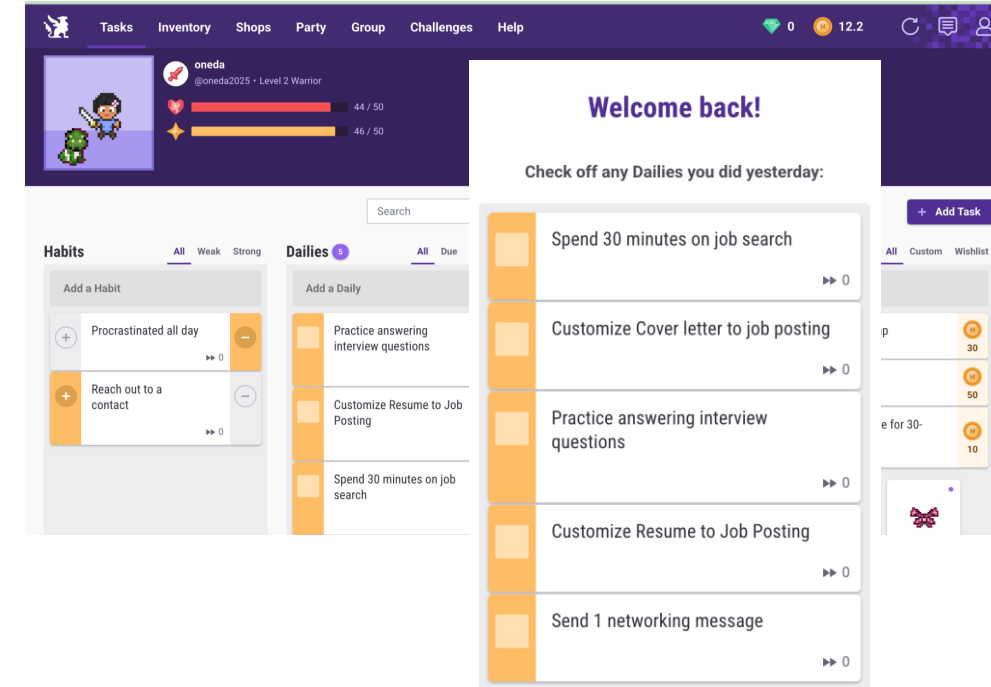
Introducing creative, gamified or unexpected approaches can increase curiosity, reduce resistance and make familiar job search tasks feel fresh again.



# 5. Breaking Routine Through Creative Engagement

## Job Search Tracker <https://habitica.com/static/home>

- **Habitica** is a free habit building and productivity website with Apps (IOS/Android) RPG (Role Playing Game)
- For clients who prefer gamified task tracking with XP (experience points) and avatars; earn points for job search tasks and track progress as a game
- Setup requires that the client create their own account, will need to copy/paste a list of job search tasks into Habitica manually (list will be included)



# 5. Breaking Routine Through Creative Engagement

Welcome back!

Check off any Dailies you did yesterday:

☐

Spend 30 minutes on job search

0

☐

Customize Cover letter to job posting

0

☐

Practice answering interview questions

0

☐

Customize Resume to Job Posting

0

☐

Send 1 networking message

0

TasksInventoryShopsPartyGroupChallengesHelp

012.2

RefreshMessagesProfile



oneda

@oneda2025 • Level 2 Warrior

44 / 50

46 / 50

Play Habitica with Others

Start your own Party or join an existing one to take on Quests and boost your motivation!

Get Started

SearchTagsAdd Task

Habits

AllWeakStrong

Add a Habit

Procrastinated all day

0

Reach out to a contact

0

Dailies

AllDueNot Due

Add a Daily

Practice answering interview questions

0

Customize Resume to Job Posting

0

Spend 30 minutes on job search

0

To Do's

ActiveScheduledComplete

Add a To Do

Create/Update Resume

Prepare Interview Answers

Rewards

AllCustomWishlist

Add a Reward

Take a guilt-free nap

30

Buy a fancy coffee

50

Watch videos online for 30-minutes

10

# 5. Breaking Routine Through Creative Engagement

**Career/Networking Bingo** – Replace a standard job search checklist with a Bingo card containing networking, AI, research and confidence-building activities.

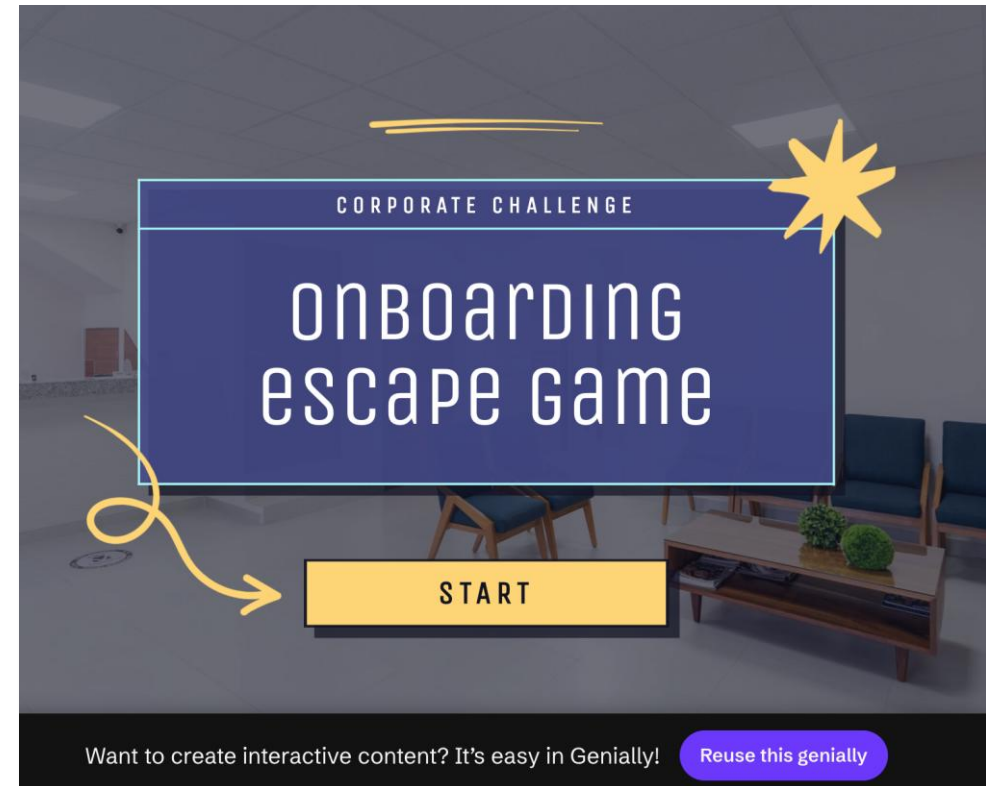
Create a free bingo card online <https://bingobaker.com/>

| Networking Bingo                                 |                                          |                                                           |                                                 |                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Send a thank-you message                         | Reach out to a former coworker           | Join or browse an online community                        | Attend a career event                           | Watch a networking webinar                               |
| Share your job goal with someone in your network | Connect with someone on LinkedIn         | Introduce yourself to someone new on LinkedIn             | Ask a mentor or friend for a referral           | Update your LinkedIn headline to reflect your job goal   |
| Attend a job fair                                | Like or comment on a career-related post | Free!                                                     | Research an industry event happening this month | Look up a contact on LinkedIn and note their career path |
| Ask someone for a coffee chat                    | Compliment someone's post or profile     | Practice answering "Tell me about yourself" with a friend | Recommend someone on LinkedIn                   | Add 3 skills to your LinkedIn profile                    |
| Join a professional group on LinkedIn            | Share an article or resource online      | Write a message asking for an informational interview     | Follow a company on LinkedIn                    | Prepare your 30-second intro                             |

## 5. Breaking Routine Through Creative Engagement

**Career Escape Rooms** – Adapt a free escape room template (e.g., Genially) into an interactive career activity that encourages clients to complete job search, networking or career exploration challenges in a new way.

*The Onboarding Escape Game* is one of their free templates: <https://view.genially.com/689e87e0803e468d451ffdb4>



# Matching Strategies to Client Needs

Different clients need different supports. Use these strategies based on what you observe.

| CLIENT IS EXPERIENCING...                                                                                                                                                                      | YOU MAY OBSERVE...                                                                                                                                                                      | TRY THESE STRATEGIES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Overwhelm</b><br>Too much to manage, hard to know where to start.                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot prioritize</li> <li>• Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>• Feels mentally exhausted</li> <li>• Avoids taking action</li> </ul>        |  <b>Low-pressure outreach</b><br>Brief check-ins and simple invitations help reduce pressure and keep the door open.                                                  |
|  <b>Low confidence</b><br>Doubts abilities and expects failure.                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative self-talk</li> <li>• Believes nothing will work</li> <li>• Compares to others</li> <li>• Gives up easily</li> </ul>                   |  <b>Small achievable goals</b><br>Break tasks into very small steps to create early wins and build confidence gradually.                                              |
|  <b>Reduced control</b><br>Feels powerless or that nothing they do will make a difference.                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feels stuck</li> <li>• Says "it doesn't matter"</li> <li>• Avoids making choices</li> <li>• Relies heavily on others</li> </ul>                |  <b>Offer meaningful choices</b><br>Provide options and involve clients in decisions to restore a sense of control and ownership.                                     |
|  <b>Withdrawal</b><br>Disconnects from services and support.                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misses appointments</li> <li>• Doesn't respond</li> <li>• Avoids communication</li> <li>• Stops participating</li> </ul>                       |  <b>Digital touchpoints</b><br>Send short, relevant resources or encouraging messages to maintain connection without pressure.                                        |
|  <b>Avoidance</b><br>Avoids job search activities to protect themselves.                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids job search tasks</li> <li>• Procrastinates</li> <li>• Makes excuses</li> <li>• Feels anxious about trying</li> </ul>                    |  <b>Micro re-engagement activities</b><br>Invite clients to take one very small action that feels safe and manageable to rebuild momentum.                           |
|  <b>NEW Boredom &amp; Routine</b><br>Disengaged due to doing the same things over and over without results. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows low interest</li> <li>• Says "I've tried everything"</li> <li>• Needs things to feel fresh</li> <li>• Loses motivation easily</li> </ul> |  <b>Breaking routine through creative engagement</b><br>Introduce novelty and gamified activities to make job search tasks feel different, engaging and motivating. |

# Practice Lab: Applying Strategies to a Client Scenario



# Client Scenario – Zoom Poll

David, 47, worked in manufacturing for 19 years before the plant where he worked closed. He has now been unemployed for 11 months.

During his first few months of unemployment, he attended appointments regularly, updated his resume, applied for a variety of jobs and expressed optimism about finding work

Over the past three months, however, his Career Development Practitioner has noticed several changes...



# Client Scenario - What's Changed?

David now:

- Misses or reschedules appointments more frequently.
- Takes longer to respond to emails.
- Says he is "still applying," but cannot remember which positions.
- Participates less during appointments.
- Has stopped discussing future career goals.
- Says, "Maybe employers just don't want someone my age."



# Please provide feedback - Zoom Survey Link:

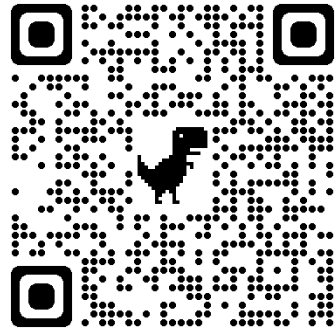




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