
No Sign of Relief

A layoff in any organization has the potential for a dramatic impact on everyone. It can't be denied that things have changed for everyone—for those who are leaving, for those in leadership positions and for those who remain. Each group will have its own losses, demands, stresses and challenges. Those who remain, an often overlooked group, may experience what has been called survivor guilt or layoff survivor sickness*. While not everyone in this group will have this experience, it is important to recognize the signs and indicators. Research has identified the following characteristics of people who are experiencing layoff survivor sickness:

- Feeling fearful, insecure and uncertain about the future
- More easily frustrated than in the past
- Feeling resentful or angry at undefined “others” or the organization
- Feeling sadness, grief or depression
- Sense of self-blame, guilt or remorse
- Belief that self or others are treated unfairly
- Mistrust or loss of faith in others or the organization
- Reluctance to take risks or to try new things
- Lowered productivity
- Diminished creativity
- Less cooperation and teamwork
- Increased appetite for information from any source, good or bad
- Blaming trends, forces or individuals within and outside the organization
- Frequent use of explanations, justifications or rationalizations
- Denial or sense of disbelief that the layoff has happened
- Overall fatigue or sense of resignation
- Increased sense of loss of control
- Heightened and personally focused anger

Not everyone experiences layoff survivor sickness. If these characteristics seem to describe you, your coworkers or employees, or you'd like to find out more about how individuals and organizations cope with change, contact your Employee Assistance Program (Cascade Centers, Inc.) at:

1-800-433-2320

**David Noer, HEALING THE WOUNDS, OVERCOMING THE TRAUMA OF LAYOFFS AND REVITALIZING DOWNSIZED ORGANIZATIONS, Jorskey-Bass Publishers, 1993.*
