



JOB UNCERTAINTY CAN CREATE STRESS AND OPPORTUNITY

BY GRETA DAVIS

When the economy and labor market are unstable, pay isn't keeping up with inflation, and large segments of the public sector are facing job losses, workers everywhere can feel uncertain.

When that uncertainty touches on job security, the stakes are higher, and the toll is greater. Lots of research shows that having a job usually means more sources of social support, which makes us healthier and more resilient. But those potential benefits diminish when chronic job insecurity enters the picture.

In fact, job insecurity can be paralyzing and overwhelming – and potentially even worse for your health than smoking, according to the National Institutes of Health. Losing your job is obviously stressful, but the result is clear and points to a likely plan, such as applying for unemployment benefits and looking for other employment. Anticipating a job loss or chronic job insecurity, on the other hand, creates ongoing anxiety and uncertainty. Next steps aren't as clear.

In the face of such uncertainty, remember some basics: Get regular

exercise, and eat well. Limit your caffeine, stay hydrated, and get regular sleep.

Take care of your mental health, too. Limit exposure to social media, reserving specific times to catch up on news from balanced sources with less sensational headlines. Take brain breaks throughout the day, disengaging from work and technology. Taking five, five-minute breaks throughout the day can allow you to recharge, reset, and improve productivity, according to the Center for Brain Health.

Deep breathing using the 4-7-8 technique (inhale through the nose for four seconds, hold breath for seven seconds, and exhale through the mouth for eight seconds) helps to reverse the stress response and reduce anxiety, according to the NIH.

Lastly, take time once a day to focus on at least one thing you're grateful for.

Beyond stress management, take time to care for your career. Think of your current contributions to your work team, document your work progress, and make sure that those

above you know your worth.

Changing times can also set the stage for a job change. Think of what's most important in your work and personal life. Set aside time to review market trends, job postings, and potential job leads that match your priorities. Talk with people in your trusted network to explore opportunities. Update your bio, résumé, and professional social media profiles, using a career coach when needed, to make it easier to pivot quickly in the face of job loss or planned career transition.

In times of uncertainty, the adage "hope for the best, prepare for the worst" is fitting guidance. Attending to self-care, stress management strategies, and gratitude practice can help with hope, and directing energy to prepare for potential job loss can help you prepare.



GRETA DAVIS (University of North Texas) is a career counselor and consultant, workplace and employment coach, and a clinical associate professor at Southern Methodist University, where she teaches career counseling and development.