



working for everyone

www.workingforeveryone.com

How-to Guide | **Staying positive during your job search**

Use this guide to help you:

- Understand emotions associated with change
- Focus on what you can control and influence
- Learn to deal with unhelpful thoughts
- Create a balanced daily routine
- Set regular goals and acknowledge your progress

Step 1 | **Understand emotions associated with change**

Being out of work can affect many parts of our lives, including our self-esteem, our identity, our relationships and our financial security. It ranks alongside death, divorce and illness as one of life's most stressful events.

It's normal to experience a range of emotions during periods of change, especially big changes such as losing a job or looking for work. You might find that you feel things such as denial, anger, grief or frustration in the beginning, discomfort and impatience during the experience, and then motivation, optimism and control as you progress. It's also common to move through these emotions more than once. You might experience each emotion a number of times during a big change in your work situation.

Use this guide to help you recognise the feelings you might have when responding to change, and to help you manage them effectively. If you find yourself 'stuck' at any stage, come back to the tips in this guide; or you can also contact one of the [helplines listed on our website](#).

Step 2 | **Focus on what you can control and influence**

Searching for a job can be frustrating and overwhelming. Have a go at keeping a diary and writing down your thoughts during the day. Is there a way that you can try to focus more on what you can control or influence? Focusing on what you can't control will probably drain your energy and create harmful emotions.

Things I can control

- Amount of job search activity
 - Learning new work and job search skills
 - How I present myself
 - Interview preparation
 - Working towards personal goals
 - Growing my network
 - Directly approaching organisations for work
 - Adopting strategies to work with any limitations I might face
- If you're setting up a business:*
- Developing a plan for my business
 - Understanding my customers' needs

Things I can influence

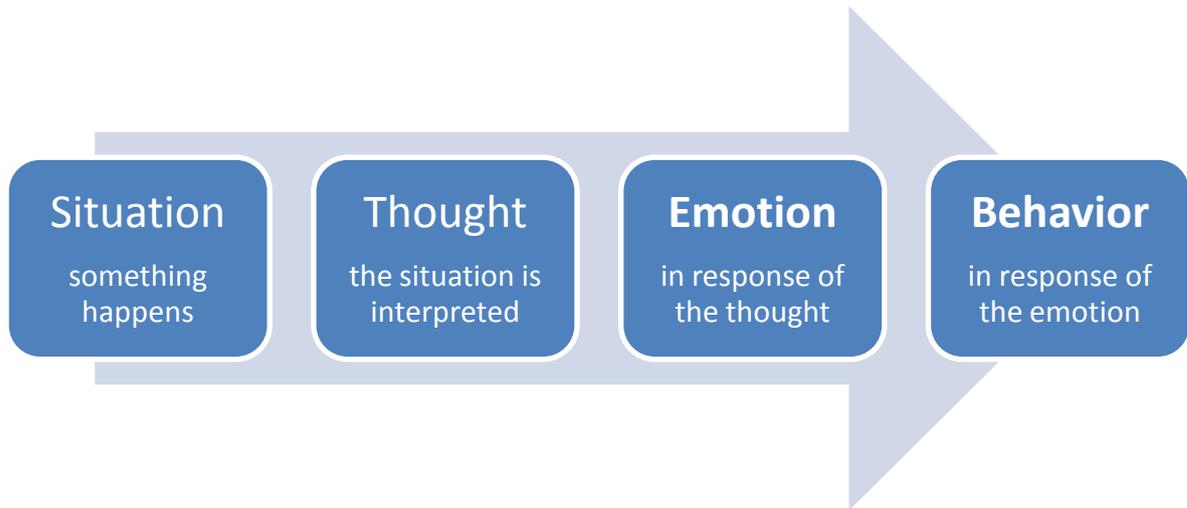
- My attitude
 - The number of people who know I'm looking for work
 - Following up applications with a phone call
 - What employers or recruiters know about my skills and motivation
- If you're setting up a business:*
- People knowing about my small business

Things I can't control

- The amount of work available
 - Centrelink or system requirements (but you can contribute to inform change)
 - Employers or recruiters calling me back or acknowledging my application
 - Getting a job
- If you're setting up a business:*
- Customers using my services

Step 3 | **Learn to deal with harmful thoughts**

It's important to recognise the relationship between your thoughts, emotions and actions. There's always more than one way to interpret a situation. Recognise how your interpretation may be keeping you stuck feeling anger, grief or loss of control.



When harmful thoughts take over your mind like 'no one wants to hire me', 'I am feeling useless', 'I am never going to make it' see if there is a way to look at your situation slightly differently that may help you to feel better. It is not an easy route, but it may be worth trying.

Below is an example of a mature age job seeker who felt bad about his situation.

'My car has broken down and it's probably going to cost me \$800 to fix. On top of this, I have applied for 3 jobs a month ago and I still haven't heard back from them. No one wants to hire me. I am really struggling to pay my bills and get myself out of this vicious cycle. It's hopeless.'

He then turned these harmful thoughts and painful emotions into something else:

'Issues always come in bulk. It's so annoying but I will try to deal with things one after another. I asked at the Community Centre if there were people who would be ok with giving me a lift when I need to go to my appointments with my provider or for my volunteering shifts. Someone rang and would be happy to help. It turns out that his wife works in a small organisation that needs help a few days a week. It's not much but it's paid and they may need more help soon. I have started slowly saving for my car repairs. Let's see where this is taking me, at least I got a foot back in paid work.'

You may also find simple **mindfulness practices** can help you clear your mind and stay present and positive when dealing with the stress of looking for work. There are many mindfulness books you could find at your local library, apps you can download on your phone or access through the internet. If you're feeling overwhelmed, you can also seek help with your local GP or contact [Beyondblue](#).

Step 4 | **Create a routine that balances work and self-care**

It's common for people who are looking for work to either do too much or too little. Looking for a job or setting up your own business often takes as much effort as an actual job. It's important to have boundaries and to make sure you have enough time for self-care, leisure and connecting with others.

Try creating a schedule for your week, with time set aside for hobbies, activities and exercise. Allow yourself to enjoy the time off when you are not looking for work, and keep your life as normal as possible by enjoying regular social activities with friends and family during the week. [Meetup.com](#) also hosts social groups for people based on their interests.

See below an example of schedule that balances jobseeking and other activities:

	Morning	Afternoon
Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact Suzy's husband who works at Greatemployer to find out more about the organisation and whether they are hiring - Update my resume with the training course I just completed - Check the job alerts from Seek.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Go to afternoon tea with the volunteer group
Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare the applications for 2 jobs selected on Monday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend a group appointment at jobactive provider - Get the groceries
Wednesday	Jobseeking related activities	Others: social, household, health related activities
Thursday	Jobseeking related activities	Others: social, household, health related activities
Friday	Jobseeking related activities	Others: social, household, health related activities

Step 5 | **Plan ahead, set goals and acknowledge your progress**

Regular planning sessions are a simple way to prepare for the week ahead. Try spending 30 minutes each Sunday working through your priorities for the week.

When setting goals, trying using the **SMART** approach – decide on goals that are **specific, measurable, achievable, realistic** and **time-bound**. It will be easier to know that you went for a 15 minute walk three times last week than to assess whether you ‘got fitter’.

Use the [Working it Out tool](#) report to help you think about and decide on your job search goals.

Find related guides on our resources page

www.workingforeveryone.com/resources

Produced November 2017