

Wanted: Positive Person

Job-hunting can get anyone down. Here's how to stay upbeat and rise above the stress and the competition **by Julie Mehta**

What are employers looking for? Someone with skills, and just as important, a positive attitude. Yet few experiences are more emotionally draining than searching for a job. It ranks right up there with divorce among what psychologists call "negative life events." How do you keep an upbeat outlook in the face of the anxiety, frustration and rejection that are often a part of job-hunting?

Get real

The sooner you confront these feelings, the better off you'll be, says Tony Beshara, author of *The Job Search Solution*. "I've talked to lots of people who say 'It doesn't bother me,' but inside they're going crazy." His advice? "Express your emotions—write them out or tape re-

cord them. Or share them with your spouse or a friend. But avoid pity parties." Don't deny, but don't dwell. Let your emotions out, then move on.

Get out

"One reason people [who are out of work] feel sorry for themselves is they don't know what to do," says Beshara. "Once they get into the activity of looking for a job, they become more positive about it." Establish a routine and plan tasks just as you would at work. Get up and dressed at a decent hour.

And get out of the house. "Surfing the internet will suck up all of your interview time. Set up some in-person get-togethers with your networking contacts," says Allison Hemming, author of *Work It!* "You



have to stay out there." Make more contacts by joining associations in your industry. Don't be shy about reaching out to family and friends who know how great you are—and who may know someone in your field who can hire you.

Get balance

Important as your job search is, don't get so consumed by it that you put the rest of your life on hold. Center yourself by starting the day with something you enjoy that is not job-related—listen to your favorite music, read poetry, say a prayer.

Exercise. It releases endorphins that alleviate anxiety and boost energy. Pursue a hobby or finish up projects you've been putting off, so you gain a sense of accomplishment regardless of how your job search is going.

"I think one of the greatest therapies is to volunteer," says Todd Bermont, author of *10 Insider Secrets to a Winning Job Search*. "It makes you

realize how truly blessed you are and can help build job skills."

Get perspective

Focus on what you can do today instead of on yesterday's regrets or tomorrow's worries. Keep trying new tactics. A part-time job or consulting work can structure your day, build your confidence and expand your network while you're looking for a full-time position. Gather notes of praise, good performance reviews and awards and post them up to remind yourself how much you have to offer.

The stress of looking for a job can take a toll on even the strongest person. Don't beat yourself up for feeling down. Take a couple of days to recharge, perhaps talk to a counselor or pastor. Then get back to your job hunt.

"Recognize that the majority of the time you are going to be rejected," says Beshara. "But don't forget: Each rejection brings you closer to a positive outcome."

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLEN WEINSTEIN