Nurture Your Mental Health During Your Job Search

Guiding Principles

1. **You are taking with you all of who you are and what you have learned.** Despite the current career landscape and unexpected challenges ahead, you are taking with you all of who you are and what you have learned. While in college, you faced unexpected challenges and triumphed in overcoming them; the job search will be no different.

2. **Develop resilience, trust in yourself, and remain confident in the face of uncertainty.** Transitional periods often bring feelings of uncertainty and fear. However, these periods of time can also be periods of personal growth. Resiliency comes from embracing these feelings and attending to your emotional well-being.

3. **Your psychological well-being is one thing you can do something about.** While you participate in your job search, be sure to attend to your psychological well-being. Identify what activities and/or relationships give you energy and participate in them. They should NOT be activities that help you escape from your life; they should require a genuine connection and active participation.

4. **Attend to the ecology of your psyche.** Maintaining the ecology of your psyche requires finding balance between participating in activities that require you to expend energy (i.e., job searching, chores, etc.) and those that give you energy (i.e., reading, writing, playing guitar, etc.). During times of transition, you may need to reevaluate what activities expend energy and what gives you energy. Remember: these activities should require connection and active participation.

5. **You have successfully navigated this balance so far.** Reflect on your college experience. You successfully navigated the process of adapting to new college experiences, finding yourself, and accomplishing your goal of graduating.

6. **Exploit the benefits of solitude: nurturing yourself, knowing yourself, attending to yourself.** Acknowledge and embrace your feelings, both the good and the bad. Take this time to participate in activities that give you joy and incorporate these activities into a routine. Also, recognize times when you may need to activate your support systems.
Frequently Asked Questions

I am having a hard time finding jobs. Why should I even bother?
Because you want a job! The job search, especially during an economic downturn, can seem overwhelming, disheartening, and impossible. But, it's only impossible if you don't apply. The job search requires you to actively participate in the search by submitting applications, networking, and participating in professional development opportunities.

- **Submitting applications:** While some industries may not be yielding many opportunities that interest you at the moment, other industries are actively recruiting. Job market fluctuation is typical, so pivoting your search is important for maximizing options. Be open to targeting a variety of industries and companies as your skills can transfer to multiple opportunities/areas.

- **Networking:** Networking is about building relationships. It is a great way to gain inside knowledge about different companies, career paths, and position descriptions while building allies in your field.

- **Professional development opportunities:** These are opportunities that build on your technical or professional skills which carry over into your career and interview process. Such opportunities include working on personal projects, attending a professional seminar, or taking a class.

How can we detach from the job search when it's time to stop for the day?
The job search process can seem overwhelming and never-ending. It is common for individuals to feel like they are not doing enough or fear they are missing out on an opportunity. This can cause people to become anxious and lead to burnout. While looking for jobs, it is important that you are also taking time to nurture your emotional well-being. Create a job search schedule that incorporates some of the activities that bring you joy. To ensure that you are spending time on your job search and nurturing yourself, set clear boundaries. Boundaries can include having a certain time of the day dedicated to the job search and having a physical space that you only use when participating in the search.

How can I overcome feelings of not being qualified?
You may have had similar feelings during your time at Carnegie Mellon University. Now that you will have (or have) soon graduated, you are leaving with valuable skills, experiences, and knowledge that will help you reach your career goals. Just as it took time and persistence to earn your diploma, be patient and forgiving of yourself during the job search process. Practice the guiding principles of nurturing your mental health and reach out for support if these feelings are interfering with your participation in the search.

How can we maintain a positive outlook after a string of unexpected rejections?
Many people experience rejection throughout the job search process. Although it can feel personal, there are many reasons that are outside of your control that can contribute to being passed over for a position. If you can recognize and embrace that there are some parts of this process you can't control, you can begin distancing yourself from rejection. In times that you're feeling overwhelmed by the rejection, incorporate breaks and participate in activities that bring you joy to restore balance in your psyche.

I am struggling with my job search. What should I do?
Reach out to your career consultant, no matter where you are in your search! They can provide you tips on starting your search and provide resources and advice for when you are feeling stuck. Appointments can be scheduled in Handshake; alumni have access to the Career & Professional Development Center for a lifetime at no additional charge!