

How to Not Lose **Yourself** When You Lose Your Job

By Laura O'Connor

I was doing everything right. Single mom, raising a son, working 40+ hours, and rarely complaining (I guess that is debatable) about my social life and the fact that there “weren’t any single guys out there.” Always making an effort to keep myself in shape and fashionably current, despite the extra 20—okay, 30—pounds that I’d been carrying around like a security blanket for as long as I can remember. I’d come to terms with my size, my marital status, my financial status, and for the most part, saw the glass as half-full. At long last I had...“found myself,” come into “my own,” and had finally acquired the knowledge to “know who I was, and what I wanted.”

Or so I thought.....

When I got the news last August that I was being laid off from my job as a practice manager because of “financial constraints” (the consolation was an awesome referral letter), I was initially able to keep a calm head and see it as an opportunity to explore other options. I’m jumping ahead...but all I can say is “options, shmoptions!” I was smart, college educated, fashion forward, savvy, and resourceful. After all, I was the “go to” girl for most of my friends when it came to where to get just about anything from a flu shot to a discounted Coach handbag.

I started out strong and firm in spirit. I was zealous, fervent, organized, and committed. Convinced this was just a “blip” in my somewhat mundane life, I was rather feverish in the beginning. I started by compiling a list of everyone I knew professionally and all personal acquaintances who were in the business arena. I even contacted the guy who refinanced my house--I’m talkin’ *everyone*! My basis for reasoning was that if I could just cast the net out wide enough I was sure to catch something in terms of a job opportunity (excuse the fish analogy...I don’t even own a fishing pole).

Four months later and the “net” is still empty. Oh there have been interviews, filled with unfulfilled promises of a call back, assurances of a second interview that never transpires, or an email that says that the position you just interviewed for now won’t be available until the beginning of the year. I was prompted to write this article when I was asked, “How do you not lose your mind when you lose your job?” The fact of the matter is that you can’t help but lose it. At unpredictable points in any given day of the week in the months that lay ahead in any job search, you *will* lose your mind at various times. Since losing your mind is inevitable, the more important thing is not to lose yourself. You have to make the commitment to keep from losing faith in yourself, losing your feeling of self worth, and losing the confidence, conviction, and integrity you gained in the many days, months and years when you were a valued employee; this fight becomes a job in itself. But, in the long run, losing any of these qualities will be more costly than losing any job ever could be. Easier said than done, I know.

