

Job Loss and the Impact on Children

Job loss has become a common part of work history for many people. Periods of unemployment can impact families emotionally, behaviorally, financially and spiritually. The relationship between parents and children can be a source of great support or great stress. Children know more than you think. Not talking about the job loss makes it seem off-limits and may increase anxiety.

As a parent, monitor for changes in children's mood, attitude, behaviors, appearance and time spent playing with friends. Specific behavior changes to watch for include:

- Increased fighting/arguing
- Being more needy
- Spending more time alone
- Changes in sleep/nightmares
- Regressed behavior
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Not wanting to go to school
- Worry about parents and family

Remember: You are valuable to your child, whether or not you are employed.

TIPS FOR PARENTS:

- Model calmness. This is an opportunity for children to learn what resiliency looks like.
- Remind children that they are not responsible. Other families are in the same situation.
- Offer reassurances like "It may be hard for a little while, but I/we will always take care of you."
- Hold family meetings to discuss how decreased income could limit some activities.
- Use art, music, puppets, or books to help children express themselves. Younger children may lack the skills to describe their feelings.
- Maintain daily routines and schedules. Children thrive on the security that routine provides.
- Use language that small children can understand. Words like "laid off" are easily misunderstood.
- Prepare to offer more patience and love. Plan one-on-one time with each child to give individual attention.
- Schedule quality family time. Moments of fun and laughter help family members feel cared for and connected.
- Be open, honest, and share your feelings with older children. Talking with them will help you learn what they need most.

"When we offer children our time, our affection, and our sense of optimism, we help them find a way through their own adversity, grief, and sorrow. They learn that they, too, can take an active part in determining what they will do with what life has handed them."

— Barbara Coloroso, "Parenting Through Crisis"

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