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While enjoying that shorter commute to work, you have less time than ever to contemplate your unique situation: still employed. But “The Economy” is impacting you, too, and the sooner you acknowledge your new challenges, the better off you will be long term. Typical symptoms reported by those still working include increased stress at work, survivor’s guilt and anxiety. Ironically, these are the same problems your former co-workers are facing. Now what?

Companies are cutting employees at break-neck pace. Some are truly strapped for cash, and some are shedding excess pounds. In better times, companies could keep staff on hand to address fluctuations in workload. Now, employers must run lean, deleting redundant roles and ensuring that everyone on board is contributing. Survivors of a mass lay-off will likely experience a shift in duties and, inevitably, a heavier workload. You might be relieved to have a job, but that doesn’t mean you’re happy.

Additional stress comes from survivor’s guilt: you pass someone’s empty cubicle on your way to the copier and wonder why them, why not you.

Anxiety is another ongoing problem. When the owners of one company addressed those remaining after a major cut, they offered a message of reassurance: these reductions are essential to the long term success of the company, they said. We’ll be more profitable this year than last, and everyone will share in this success, they added. The owners were cheerleading, but the employees were unmoved. They wondered whether they were hearing only part of the story. The employees’ understandable sense of powerlessness made it difficult for them to know what to think about their futures.

What to do? Of course, acknowledge your feelings. But after that you need to take your career into your own hands. Even well-meaning management can be surprised sometimes, and forced into additional (albeit unanticipated) cuts. Now is a good time to be skeptical.

Accept the added workload like the lucky employed person you are. But recognize you are still only one person. Discuss new projects thoroughly with those involved and gain a clear understanding of everyone’s expectations. Be upfront about your ability to meet deadlines and keep others informed regarding your progress, your challenges and any additional resources you need. Be quick to ask questions. Allow for a learning curve when taking on new tasks.

Once you know what’s expected, get everything in writing. If your boss is suddenly let go, you will want the next guy in charge to know where you stand.

For networking and friendship, stay in touch with former co-workers through LinkedIn or Facebook. You’re only one closed-door conversation away from joining them. Start networking now, and spend some time every week positioning yourself for something new. If a better job comes along? Don’t be afraid to take it. The working world is changing now. Be open.

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