

3 Effective ways to handle redundancy survivor guilt

While those who have recently been made redundant might beg to differ, surviving company layoffs can be equally distressing.

Yes, you won't be suffering the same financial instability as your former colleagues or have an immediate job hunt hanging over your head. However, being part of a team that has suddenly lost several members, yet is still expected to produce the same output, can understandably take its toll.

Then there is the survivor's guilt to deal with. According to the *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development*, "survivor syndrome includes feelings of guilt, job insecurity, fear and anger towards the organisation for being put in this position, essentially systematic from a perceived breach of their psychological contract:

Add in the looming feeling of uncertainty that you could be next on the chopping block, and it all adds up to a lot of stress. So what can you do to alleviate these feelings?

1. Lean in

Ignoring what has happened won't just add to your guilt, it also has the potential to upset the equilibrium of the team you're working on so prepare for a period of mourning followed by a period of readjustment and acceptance.

Things might not improve overnight but by discussing how you feel with colleagues or your line manager you'll be able to mentally move on from the impact of layoffs. And if you're in management, addressing what has happened

will not only show that you're an empathetic leader, it will encourage your team to speak up about any issues they're dealing with.

2. Be realistic

Restructuring can sometimes force you to take a hard look at where your own career is going and surviving a round of redundancies shouldn't be confused as a promotion of sorts. In fact, quite the opposite is true—any company in financial flux generally won't be offering promotions to existing staff any time soon.

That doesn't mean you should sit back and quietly quit, also known as doing the bare minimum you're contractually obliged to do, and where you don't go above and beyond what's expected of you. This is the quickest way to ensure your experience will stagnate, and the edge that helped you survive redundancy will quickly blunt.

3. Add value

A good way to get around this is to look at alternative ways you can add value to your position. For example, if your company still has internal learning and development (L&D) options open to staff or budget that can be used on external training, make it your business to avail of opportunities to bolster your own technical and soft skills.

However, sometimes it's impossible to rebound from a round of redundancies and it's only a matter of time before relations start to sour beyond repair. So if you feel like you could be next, it's prudent to get your own affairs in order: make sure your CV is up-to-date, start networking with your professional peers and do your research about the companies that are actively hiring.

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