

Linda's Suggestions for Supporting Unemployed Single Adults

by Linda Hardin

[USA Today](#) reports that in the current recession single adults are losing jobs at a rate that's 50% higher than for married adults. According to a report by the Labor Department, the single adult jobless rate was 13.5% in August. For the same month, jobless for married adults was 6.3%. Included in the single adult grouping are young single adults who may be less educated and experienced.

With this information and recalling a conversation at work on this subject, I researched the topic for helpful hints. Internet advice covered a wide spectrum of thoughts. I even found a church-based support group for unemployed professionals. Based on what I learned, here are my suggestions for ministry to unemployed single adults.

1. Grieve the losses. Besides the obvious loss of income, there are many losses experienced due to a lay off. Many of these losses are "disenfranchised grief"—losses that aren't typically acknowledged as grief-worthy such as loss of discretionary income and self-esteem. Recognize that each person's list will be unique. Take time to grieve the losses. Add to the list as other losses are identified, too.

2. Seek help from others. As the sole bread-winner, being unemployed means no income, unless individuals are working more than one job. Even then, there is a dramatic income reduction.

In Single Adult Ministries, friends are often described as "family." When a single adult in your ministries becomes unemployed, encourage others in the ministry to provide assistance. I recall one single-parent who shared stories of people from the ministry and church who left bags of groceries on her porch. While individuals may not be able to leave bags of groceries, collectively, working together the ministry can provide appreciated resources.

3. Acknowledge that your job is now job-hunting. Conventional wisdom for the unemployed is to invest an eight-hour day searching for jobs. Remember this includes developing a resume, searching the internet to learn about prospective employers, and networking.

4. Recognize that not getting a job is often perceived as rejection. While individuals may cognitively realize that not being offered a job doesn't equate to rejection, emotionally it feels like rejection. Watch for signs of depression when days of job-hunting turn into weeks and weeks turn into months.

Friends and ministry leaders can counter this challenge by encouraging the unemployed persons to make a list of strengths and attributes. Recommend that they post the list in a visible place as a reminder of their value and worth.

5. Talk to others. In the current economy, there are others who share your plight. It may

be easy to consider unemployment as failure when it had nothing to do with the individuals and their skill-sets. Don't be overcome by embarrassment or shame. Recognize that those who are walking this journey have learned useful lessons and tips. Ask for suggestions, share what you've learned, and offer and receive encouragement and support.

6. Network with others. As others learn about the need for employment, they may have contacts that will assist you. These may be names of individuals in HR (Human Resources) departments, managers and companies looking for employees, and other resources.

7. Maintain your relationship with God. During difficult times it is natural to question where God is. This is the time to maintain a strong faith, putting into action your belief that God is always present and faithfully working in your lives. Draw strength from biblical stories of God's faithfulness. Recall previous experiences when God demonstrated His faithfulness to you. Allow the stories of others in similar circumstances to affirm your faith.

8. Stay connected. When facing difficulties, one temptation is to withdraw. Recognize your need to socialize and to receive support. As difficult as it may be to receive help from others, you deny them ministry opportunities. Graciously accept their help. Remember you may be able to minister to others, too.

9. Laugh a lot. Laughter is good medicine. Watch for the funny things that happen. Learn to laugh at yourself, too. If necessary, find a book of corny jokes and learn to tell them well. Laughter can make the most difficult situation seem manageable.

This season of unemployment may extend longer than you anticipated. Reach out to others and allow them the opportunity to "companion" you on the journey. The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up" (4:9-10a).