

# LAI D OFF at 65.

*Now What Do I Do?*

By Harli Rabow

**In January 2009, a few days before my 65th birthday, I joined about 500,000 others in this country who lost their jobs on that day.**

All of us, working or not, lost huge chunks of our 401k funds. For my husband and me, that chunk is 33 percent. Our financial advisor said it could take as much as eight years just to make back the loss.

**That means I work until I'm 73 and my husband works until he's 76.** There's no chance of recovering that loss if I can't find another job and he loses his.

I can't grow my social security contribution without working. There are no stock options without a job. Oh, and about those stock options, they weren't worth much because the company's stock sunk so low.

Another loss is in the value of your house. We're not suffering that one, at least not yet, but so many millions are.

The losses continue to pile up when health insurance, college

tuition and helping family members are factored in.

That semi-retirement business you thought you'd start with some of your 401K money? Forget about it. And how many of you retired folks are now faced with having to work again?

In the career search classes, meetings and professional association gatherings I've attended, I see faces frozen in shock.

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People over age 50, from administrative assistants to vice presidents, express worry about age discrimination and having to take substantial pay cuts, and that's if they find new jobs.

Relocating may not be an option. Many of us have very elderly parents who can't be easily or happily moved. Then there are those of us parents/

grandparents with children and grandchildren living in our homes.

The rest of this article is about hope, transition and finding our way out of this scary, unexpected time in our lives. I asked a career counselor, "Who will hire a 65-year-old woman in this economy?" She said, "If you have a fire in your belly and you know what you want to do, you'll be okay."

Another career counselor recommended a book that I find particularly helpful, *Transitions* by William Bridges, who says: "endings are the first phase of transition."

The second phase is a time of loss and emptiness before "life" resumes an intelligible pattern and direction. The third phase is that of beginning anew.



**For me, the hard part is working** patiently through the emptiness of the in-between – the end of the job and the unknown future.

This below list of questions was compiled by NOVA (North Valley) at CONNECT! in Sunnyvale, California (affiliated with the California Employment Development Department) as part of the Managing Change class. I am working through these questions to rediscover who I am, where I want to go and start to define my next steps.

- What have I done successfully in my life?
- What do I want that will make my life better?
- What changes would I have to make to get what I want?
- What have I been praised for doing well?
- What do I really like to do?
- What situations do I dislike?
- What are my good points?
- What have previous employers praised me for?
- What qualities do I have that would favorably impress an employer in a job interview?

- How do I prevent myself from doing what I want to do?
  - What barriers do I need to work on for job success?
  - What might I like to do and where might I want to work?
- Participating in this process helps** me recognize old, repetitive patterns of thought which I am able to replace with a wealth of new perceptions, renewed energy and motivation.

Now, I allow myself to consider new expectations that I can get to where I want to be and still have the life I've been pursuing. The emptiness is giving way to a new sense of clarity.

*Harli Rabow writes training materials and various types of technical documentation. She greatly enjoyed writing this article for ActiveOver50.*