



### SO, HAVE YOU BEEN A GOOD LISTENER LATELY?

by Anne Spieker, Professional Career Consultant, Racine County Workforce Development Center, Business Services

Spousal consent doesn't mean with your unemployment! Finding your way back to gainful employment doesn't have to be painful.

Often during the course of coaching professionals I can sense the tension that arises with a candidate as it relates to their spouse who has now officially become their job finder and official timekeeper. The initial knee-jerk reaction of a spouse is support but that support about the unemployment situation lasts about two weeks and then it starts to wane and transpire into nagging or playing cop. I've actually had candidates tell me their spouse calls them during the day to see how many jobs they have applied for since they left in the morning. These are healthy active professionals under the auspicious of a new regime.

Activities such as this in most cases do not help the person struggling with the lows and highs of unemployment nor does it help the spouse to take on additional duties as career counselor or timekeeper. But by pure osmosis and metamorphous the supportive spouse with their delightful attitude in the early stages of the process begin to change into something I am sure they would rather not; but they do not know how to stop the natural progression of their emotions such as jealousy, resent, frustration, obligation, anger and fear.

The natural progression puts the employed spouse in a difficult situation and often the relationship becomes strained. The unemployed person has enough to deal with when it comes to rejection, the job search itself and staying positive in dealing with their own emotional highs and lows that additional agitation can actually interfere with a positive job search. Not saying that it cannot be motivational at times, but resent starts to build on one end or the other if it persists and is unwarranted.

Looking for a job is a process and one that is misunderstood by the spouse unless they themselves have recently completed a search. Under the tutelage of a career counselor, someone looking for a job actually has a process in place and will eventually find employment. Given the proper tools to do a search, one can succeed at finding a job in a relatively short amount of time. Yes there are some situations that can make a job search seem like forever, but with sound job search practices husband and wife can both be rest assured employment will eventually come.

Things to do when you know your spouse might be struggling with motivation: Remember the acronym DORA.

- Discuss how the search is going by allowing the unemployed person to talk about what kinds of jobs they are applying to on a daily basis. Not how many, but what kind? Allow them to share with you what they think is best for them.
- Offer your support and let your spouse know that you understand it isn't easy being unemployed and those things will eventually turn around.
- Remind them that consistent applying is where it is at and that a day without applying will put the search on hold in terms of screening calls and possible interviews.
- Allow for compartmentalized time and venting time so your spouse can work on the applications and vent when things go awry or a rejection reaches their in-box.

Yes candidates and their spouses find their way back to a harmonious relationship but during some candid conversations I have learned that spouses do get a bit jealous that their unemployed spouse is at home and it happens to be a nice day out. Or the unemployed spouse is home during the summer doing things with the kids. It has even come out that the only reason they are unemployed is because they wanted to be and they don't want to work. Although that may be true in a small number of cases (I've not had it come up) most profession-

als definitely want to work; but scared that finding a match with an employer seems distant and impossible. Unemployed candidates can be gun shy and do not want to have to do this again for a long time so they are tentative at best. They just lost their job and it isn't just the job they lost, they also lost their identity, self esteem and daily structure. It is an adjustment on both sides and takes some elevation in patience levels and compassion.

In addition to the patience and compassion components, the financial piece is also significant as well health benefits and Cobra Insurance payments come into the picture. Immediately upon notice of termination or when someone quits or contemplating changing jobs, it is imperative that you have a family meeting to discuss your financial picture and future. Being in the same boat is critical for landing together safely in the financial harbor. You have to discuss your finances right away, which means do not wait. Most unemployed people continue on with their spending habits until it is too late. When the paycheck ends so does elaborate and unnecessary spending or tempers and check books will get out of balance. Listen and talk to your spouse during this difficult adjustment period. You need each other and the person who is unemployed should not be stressed during their interviews or they will not get hired. So, have you been a good listener lately?