

Work Interventions Network (WIN): An International Collaboration of Practitioners and Researchers on Unemployment and Underemployment

Background: At the outset of the pandemic, a group of 10 vocational/counseling psychologists, career practitioners, and a sociologist convened to discuss the unemployment crisis (which includes underemployment and seasonal work). We concurred that the challenges evoked by the massive job losses require comprehensive and flexible sources of support and skill building. Building on the excellent services that are already available via employment and career transition agencies, training programs, and independent providers, we designed six 75-90 minute workshops that can be used in tandem or independently to support individuals who are unemployed and underemployed. Our intention is to disseminate this workshop content as widely as possible at no cost to agencies or providers.

Planning, Exploring, and Engaging in the Job Search (Two workshops)

Losing work is a crisis, but also offers opportunities to develop a pathway to a sustainable, and optimally, meaningful work life. Participants will engage in two workshops that can be offered together or as standalone workshops—one workshop is devoted to career planning and the second workshop focuses on developing and implementing action plans in searching for new work options and opportunities. Included in the two workshops are exercises to enhance self-awareness, explore new career paths, and reinvigorate the job search process using state-of-the art evidence-based practices.

Deepening and Sustaining Relationships

Being unemployed or underemployed and searching for a job are often very lonely challenges. In this workshop, participants will have an opportunity to deepen their relationships, which is an essential source of support and resilience. Using the strengths of working in a group of peers, the workshop will foster a renewed sense of purpose for participants to connect with their friends and family, and develop connections within the group that can be sustained for the long haul.

Fostering Social Awareness and Reducing Self-Blame

Navigating work disruptions often leads individuals to experience shame and stigma along with self-blame. This workshop focuses on helping participants enhance their critical consciousness (CC), which refers to the capacity to read the world and to enact change in one's life and context. Developing CC offers a powerful reframe about the causes of unemployment, which can reduce self-blame. CC also furnishes a protective factor that enhances resilience and promotes active engagement in one's life. Activities include group-based discussions of participants' experiences, which provide the content for a discussion of the larger factors that constrain the labor market.

Building Emotional Resilience and Self-Care (Two workshops)

Managing unemployment and underemployment is hard and stressful. These two workshops focus on self-care and stress reduction that can help to prevent mental health problems, which research indicates are far more prevalent and challenging during periods of job disruption. Participants will have an opportunity to build emotional resilience and enhance their self-care strategies, which are essential for managing work-related stresses.

Provider skills and training: *The workshops are designed to be used by career coaches/counselors who have experience in working with groups and in providing supportive work-based interventions. More specialized training in mental health is not needed to deliver these workshops.*

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