

Healthwise. SVUH

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Coping with Recession

Submitted by Dr. Abbie Lane, Consultant Psychiatrist, Dublin County Stress Clinic, St. John of Gods.

Listening to the radio or TV recently you would think the world was coming to an end – all we hear is ‘emergency, disaster, crisis, crash, catastrophe’. All negative and all leading to feelings of insecurity and doubt. The reality is that life goes on; waves of recession are part of life, they come and they go... Our challenge is to keep ourselves well through this difficult time. We need to turn off the bad news and look instead to what gives us satisfaction, happiness and contentment.

Most of the bad news relates to worldwide matters over which we have no control. To cope with recession we must turn the focus back on our own selves and those close to us. Take control of our own life.

When we hear bad news we react and get ready to deal with it in the same way as our cave man ancestors used to deal with danger; they either ran from it, hid from it or fought it – the ‘fight or flight response’. We call this the ‘stress response’ but it is also our ‘survival response’ that makes us ready for action and able to deal with difficult situations. We can look at bad news in a few ways, we can feel threatened or we can feel challenged.

It is usual when we hear bad news to feel upset, our sleep may be affected, we may lose our appetite, feel sick, unsettled, anxious or worried or unable to cope. This is normal and tends to settle down in a few days usually by talking it out with friends or family.

In times of recession the rates of some illness such as anxiety, depression and suicide increase in the early stages but an unusual thing then happens – as recession goes on it has been shown that people become healthier. The rate of stress illness falls as people adopt a healthier lifestyle by smoking less, drinking less alcohol, eating healthier and exercising more.



So how can we turn this difficult time around for us? We need to start to control our selves, our lifestyles and our relationships because the other global factors and changes we can do little or nothing about. Think about it – was there anything you personally could have done to change or prevent the global situation?

The WHO (World Health Organisation) is a group monitoring world health and they take an interesting view on what health is – they look on health as being the presence of positive health and well being rather than the absence of disease. This means that all of us can work towards a healthy lifestyle.

They recommend 8 things that keep us healthy and well:

- Family and Community
- Education
- Physical Fitness
- Positive Outlook
- Healthy Diet
- Minimal Alcohol and Cigarettes
- Manage stress
- Monitor Cholesterol and Blood Pressure.

You will see that all these areas are well within our control. The first step for us is to decide to ‘give it a lash’. We need to kick start our ‘can do’ attitude. It can be useful to think of someone who uses this approach. Those of you old enough will remember Ireland’s World Cup games in the States as an example of this, or John O’Shea and the GOAL charity, and more recently Irelands Grand Slam Rugby success as examples of people setting out to go the extra mile.

So make the decision to change - muster up the courage to do things differently and look forward with spirit to face the challenge. To start you need to examine your current situation using the 8 factors above. Be clear and honest with yourself and decide what areas you will target first. Henry Ford said ‘You can’t build a reputation on what you are going to do’ so you need to plan and chart your course.

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If you are in immediate difficulties you need to get a clear idea or outline of the problem. For example, if you have money concerns try to get support. Talk to others about it and if you need to then get advice – the MABS service is freely available throughout the country.

Look at your habits and lifestyle. Here are some questions to get you started. Ask yourself:

- Am I doing activities that I like or that I find stressful?
- Am I doing enough exercise?
- Am I drinking or smoking too much?
- Have I enough time to spend with partner and family?
- When was the last time I did something for fun?
- What gives me pleasure?
- What puts a smile on my face?
- What makes me feel happy?
- In 5 years time what would I like to say I had achieved?
- If I was terminally ill what would be my greatest regret?

The aim of this task is to identify the activities and the life style that brings you contentment or satisfaction. Contentment is being satisfied with your life in this moment. We can think or assume that money makes us contented but this is not so – what gives us satisfaction is having our needs or desires fulfilled and the questions above should help you decide what your values are and ‘what makes you tick’.

Generally our values and happiness are fulfilled by activities with family and friends, spending time with them, talking and sharing with them, laughing, talking, caring or doing things for others, having hobbies or interests outside of work, helping others such as voluntary work, improving our lot by doing courses or further training, being physically fit and having a spiritual outlet. All readily available, within our control and known to improve our health and well-being and to increase our ability to cope with stress or pressure.



Remember:

*‘Success is not final, failure is not fatal:
it is the courage to continue that counts’*
Winston Churchill.

Top tips for coping with redundancy:

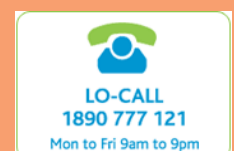
“When we can no longer change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves”

Viktor Frankl

- **Take stock:** Redundancy gives you a great chance to re-assess your career, your life and what’s important to you. Look at it as a potential catalyst to bigger and better things; something to force you outside your comfort zone and prompt you to take action.
- **Talk to other people:** Talking to people you know who’ve been through the experience will help. You’ll be surprised by how many of them look back at their redundancy in a positive light.
- **Get what you can:** Many companies only offer the statutory redundancy packages they’re obliged to under Irish law. Don’t let that stop you from negotiating for more. The more you get the easier the transition between jobs will be. If you’re affiliated to a trade union, see if they have negotiated preferential redundancy rates for members.
- **Sign on immediately:** This is important to maintain your PRSI contributions, and the money every week will help supplement your savings while you look for work.
- **Start job-hunting:** Finding a new job can take a while, so start looking immediately. Your employer is obliged to give you time off during your notice period to look for work.
- **Tighten the belt:** Cutting back on unnecessary spending and sticking to a strict budget while your income is suppressed will help reduce financial pressure.

Most of all, try to stay positive, and look at your redundancy as a stepping stone to the next stage of your varied and interesting career.

The Citizen’s Information Centre is situated in the Main Corridor of the hospital each Wednesday from 10am–4pm. We are in a position to help you on these issues. Alternatively.....



By Liz O’Connell, Dublin 2,4,6 Citizens Information Service

Enjoy life without spending a cent!

Did you know that not too far from you there is a place where you can access more than half a million books, a large selection of audiobooks, daily & Sunday newspapers, numerous magazines & periodicals, DVDs, local history resources and a lot more besides, and all completely free? I'm talking about your local public library and if you haven't visited in a while I bet you'd be surprised to see how much it has changed in the last few years.

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Libraries consist of 9 branches serving the county from Blackrock to Shankill along the coast, and inland to Dundrum. No longer concentrating exclusively on books (although our collection has been expanded and developed dramatically and is now a mix of brand new bestsellers and specialist, sometimes hard-to-find material), libraries now have a lot more to offer!

CDs and DVDs

Our DVD collection now consists of a broad range of films, both new and classic, documentaries and TV series. Equally the music collection covers many genres, classic, pop, traditional, jazz & rock. We also provide large print books and books on CD for people with visual impairment.

Internet and Wi-Fi

Every library offers free access to the Internet and they all offer Wi-Fi accessibility, which means you can bring your laptop into any library and surf away free of charge. You can book the library Internet computers for 50 minutes at a time, or, if you're new to computers and would like to learn the basics, you can avail of our *Webwise* tutor-assisted courses.



The virtual library

You can renew your loans, search our catalogue, request books or other items from your own library service or others, all without actually visiting the library. This can be done through a virtual library service, which you can access 24 hours a day. Visit our website at www.dlrcoco.ie/library/ to see what else you can do.

Library events

Throughout the year there is a lot happening in our libraries, from the regular meetings of various clubs and workshops to special events and festivals. Phone your local branch for details, drop in and pick up a calendar or check out our website.

Block loans and Home Library Service

For older people who may find it difficult to visit the library on a regular basis, or those convalescing after an illness, we offer a block loan library card, which allows you to borrow more items for a longer period of time. We also provide a Home Library Service, which is available to residents of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown who are confined to their own homes or are unable to visit the library for any reason. You can ask at any branch about joining the waiting list.



Greater access for all

Public libraries are now wheelchair accessible, and all have basket trolleys for use within the library as well as a wide range of other useful aids. And of course the staff are always on hand to help with any difficulties.

For more information please log on to our website: www.dlrcoco.ie/library/

Sunday @ Noon concert series at Hugh Lane Gallery

These concerts take place at 12pm Sunday at Hugh Lane Gallery and admission is free. The last concert before the summer break will take place on 21st June. Concerts will resume again in September. For more information please contact Gavin O'Suillivan at email: gmusic@indigo.ie or log onto www.hughlane.ie



'Let's Walk and Talk'

'Let's Walk & Talk' is a great way for people to stay healthy, meet people and learn a little something about our Fair City. This initiative comprises weekly walks in various parts of the City, themed historical walking tours and other special events. For more information contact Ronan O'Donnell on (01) 2223726 or check out the website www.letswalkandtalk.ie



Value for money in SVUH Cafeteria

There is a wide variety of food available in the Cafeteria to suit all budgets. All food items are individually priced to allow customers to choose the foods which are most suited to their budget and taste.

Breakfast service in the morning has a full range of cooked breakfast as well as fruit, juice, breads, scones and cereal. Freshly baked scones and muffins are available for morning break along with freshly brewed fair-trade coffee, tea and herbal teas.

At lunch time the range of dishes available include paninis, freshly made sandwiches to order, a selection of salads in addition to the more traditional hot lunch and carvery.

At tea time there is a selection of salads and hot meals available.

An example of the value available in the Cafeteria is outlined below:

- Healthy Breakfast (bowl of cereal, piece of fruit, yogurt and tea or coffee or glass of juice) for under €3.50.
- Carvery lunch (joint of the day, selection of 2 veg and potato) for under €5.00.
- Evening meal (hot main course with tea or coffee and portion of brown bread) for under €4.00.

Finished your meal?....

Why not take in the fresh
air with
a walk around our
Sli na Slainte route.



Get ready, Get active, Get fit...Commute! Cycle to Work Tax Relief Scheme

As part of the hospital's on-going commitment to promoting sustainable transportation for staff, a Cycle to Work Tax Relief Scheme was introduced in January 2009. During its first 6 months, the scheme has facilitated the tax-efficient purchase of a bicycle and certain safety equipment by 35 SVUH staff for the purposes of commuting to/from work.



Full details of the scheme and copies of the application forms can be accessed from the Discounts and Staff Benefits Section of the Intranet (accessible from quick links menu on home page).

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS HEALTHWISE SEPTEMBER 2009: Contributions for next issue of Healthwise should be sent to Irene Gilroy, Health Promotion at i.gilroy@svuh.ie by 1st August 2009.