



At no time in recent memory have recent college graduates and other young people in the early stages of their careers experienced the kind of formidable challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. Seemingly overnight, the bottom fell out from a thriving economy that was seeing record job growth and many promising career opportunities in various sectors.

For those who have been laid off, seen job offers pulled back or had other career prospects derailed since COVID-19 hijacked our lives in March, accept the fact that the setbacks you've been dealt were beyond your control. Complaining and obsessing about the ways this pandemic has negatively affected your life will only distract you and fuel anxiety. Focus on the things that you can control, including how much time and energy you devote to looking for work, strengthening your education and skills to make you more appealing to prospective employers, broadening your social and professional networks, and maintaining good health.

Resilience and optimism will help get you through the chaos, stress and uncertainty that millions of people are experiencing right now, whether it's related to a career setback, the loss of a loved one from COVID-19 or another illness, the nation's tumultuous political environment, the troubling incidents of social injustice or other issues. Summoning the strength to cope with these challenges will teach you important lessons about your own resolve, deepen your empathy for others who are struggling, and enable you to evolve and grow as a person.

For those who have hit a career roadblock, building resilience and maintaining a sense of perpetual optimism will help you stay focused, flexible and productive – and maintain confidence in yourself and your own abilities. Keep reminding yourself that this period of career limbo is only temporary, but also be prepared to work harder than you ever have before. Don't underestimate the power of networking. Remember, you are not alone. Everyone is feeling some level of frustration with our current plight. Reach out regularly to family, friends and colleagues to check on how they're doing (something everyone will appreciate). These conversations can often produce job leads or offers to put you in touch with people in their network of contacts who may be able to help.

Unless you are financially secure or have family helping you out, chances are you still need money to put food on the table and pay your bills. Given those realities, if you can't find the ideal job in your profession right away, you may need to take a step down or sideways in the career ladder by working odd jobs or taking a position for which you're overqualified. All prospective employers certainly recognize the job market we're in and won't hold it against you, and most will appreciate the determination of those who keep working while actively looking for jobs for which they are best suited.

As you evaluate your options, I encourage you to reassess your career goals and objectives. For many of us, COVID-19 has altered our outlook on life, helping us recognize and appreciate the things that are truly important, such as our families. For those in the early stages of their careers, this period of transition also provides an opportunity to reexamine your priorities, and think about what gives you enjoyment and your role within the broader community. If you're one of the millions of Americans whose health – or the health of family and friends – has been personally affected by the virus, perhaps it's time to focus less on how much money you can make and more on career opportunities in professions that enable you to help people and society in general, such as health and human services, and public service.

Perhaps most importantly throughout this tumultuous time, don't forget to take care of yourself and pay attention to your family. Eat well, get some exercise, do fun things with your spouse, significant other or kids, and recognize that alcohol and drugs will take their toll in the long run, so don't use them as a coping mechanism.

Job-hunting can be a humbling process, so always remember these immortal words from the late U.K. Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Dowling". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping 'M' and 'D'.

Michael J. Dowling
President and Chief Executive Officer
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