



Getting fired does not signify the end

Getting the sack is one of the most disappointing things that could happen in your career.

You may feel rejected, alienated from your work colleagues and embarrassed that people know why you've been fired. Having been sacked, you may be unemployed without a workplace reference.

Being laid off because of restructuring and downsizing can be stressful but being fired is worse. At least, if you have been laid off for company reasons, it's not usually your fault and there is more understanding. Being dismissed is performance or character related and having a black mark on either may seem damning.

Typically, you are fired for something you did or didn't do. Perhaps it was poor performance. Maybe you didn't have the right skills or experience. Or you didn't get along with the staff. It is important that you know why you have been fired.

So, how does one recover?

Firstly, ensure procedural fairness has occurred. If you have doubts, you can contact Safework SA for general advice. They will be able to refer you to helpful legal bodies including: Young Workers' Legal Service, Legal Aid and Working Women's Centre.

You may also call the Australian Council of Trade Unions, even if you are not a union member. Both you and the company you worked for have a right to confidentiality. You need to protect your reputation because it may affect your future job opportunities.

Allow yourself some time to process your feelings of disappointment. This is a difficult time. Look objectively at the reasons for being fired. If you were genuinely in the wrong, use this to learn. Determine what you would do differently next time.

Everyone makes mistakes; there are opportunities to try again. However tempting it may be, alcohol (and drugs) can make things worse. This is not the time to hit the bottle!

I had a client who slammed a security guard against the boot of his car after he was accused of stealing. Although his past work history was unblemished he was dismissed instantly. He was worried that he would never get hired again but he took responsibility and sought to make amends with the company and security guard. They didn't rehire him but I'll never forget the day he walked in my office, smiling from ear to ear. He had found a new employer.

Ensure you have good friends and family around to support you. Avoid critical people. Depending on the amount of devastation you feel, book in for counselling to handle issues that could lead to anxiety and depression.



This is an important time to:

- Get an impressive resume and cover letter together (with good referees)
- Review your skill set and achievements. Rebuild your confidence
- Market yourself to new networks
- Buy a new article of clothing that helps you look (and feel) your best

If asked “why did you leave your last job?” avoid lying but don’t give too much information. Say something like, “The last role definitely had its rewarding moments, but it wasn’t the best fit. I think I’m more suited for the position you are offering.”

Explain why. Don’t criticise your last employer. If asked further say, “I’d prefer not to go into too much detail, as my mother said, if you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.”