



When you're the one left standing...

You've survived a recent layoff or "rightsizing" and you feel relieved—sort of... Organizations may work hard to address the needs of employees who are let go, but offer little support to those who survive the cuts. After all, they're the "lucky ones." Survivors often experience mixed feelings of relief, confusion, helplessness, and guilt; commonly known as survivor's guilt. To deal with the guilt, start here.

Acknowledge your feelings – They're real, and pretending that everything is OK won't make them go away. We regularly develop close relationships with co-workers who become an important part of our life and the loss of that relationship is painful. Allow yourself to grieve the loss.

Talk about it – Share your experience. Find someone who can listen objectively and help you deal with your feelings, frustrations and fears constructively. Employers are often unaware of the internal turmoil being experienced by remaining employees so ask for help or use your EAP.

Stop blaming yourself – You didn't cause the layoff and you couldn't have prevented it. Let go of the feeling that somehow you should or could have done something to save your co-worker's job.

Take care of yourself – Stay physically active. Physical activity increases endorphin levels which improve mood and boost energy levels. Stay connected with family and friends. Continue with normal activities and hobbies.

Help former co-workers – They often feel ostracized because survivors find it difficult to talk about the "elephant in the living room." Helping them will also help you to feel better—just listen, review their resume, pass their name along or treat them to lunch.

When you're the one "left standing," it's normal to experience mixed feelings and absolutely OK to be relieved and grateful to have a job.

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