

Bouncing back after a setback

Easy · 10 min to read · Free

After a layoff, breakup or failed class: tell someone who listens; protect sleep, regular meals, exercise and go easy on caffeine; break the problem into pieces you can act on; and do one concrete thing today. Laid off through no fault of your own? File for unemployment in the state where you worked right away, because the first check usually takes two to three weeks. Skip numbing it with alcohol or drugs. If the stress interferes with daily life or won't lift, talk therapy works; in crisis, call or text 988.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ A pen and paper, or a notes app
- ☐ One person you trust
- ☐ For a layoff: your last employer's address and your work dates

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Reach out to someone who listens.** The APA says connecting with understanding people reminds you you're not alone. NIMH also suggests leaning on friends or family who help you cope in a positive way.
- 2 **Take care of the basics.** Exercise, eat healthy regular meals, keep a sleep routine, and cut back on caffeine. Sleep, food, water and movement help your body handle stress.
- 3 **Write it down.** NIMH suggests keeping a journal, and noticing and challenging negative, unhelpful thoughts. If you catch yourself catastrophizing, swap in a more balanced thought.
- 4 **Ask what you can do about it, and break big problems into manageable pieces.** List three pieces you control, and put a day next to each.
- 5 **Do one small thing today that moves you toward a goal.** Laid off? Spend an hour on your resume.
- 6 **Look back at past hard times.** What helped then?

Watch out Numbing it with alcohol or drugs is like putting a bandage on a deep wound.

DAD NOTE *Bad days end. Do one small thing, then go to bed.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/mind/handling-setbacks/bouncing-back-after-a-setback/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: American Psychological Association; National Institute of Mental Health; U.S. Department of Labor; CareerOneStop; Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.