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I've applied to 533 jobs since I was laid off 216 days ago. Here are 5 things I've learned about resilience.

1. I don't beat myself up. I've tweaked my resume dozens of times. I've tried personalizing it for each job. I've included cover letters and skipped them. I've cold messaged hirers through InMail. I've contacted peers, recent and from over a decade ago. None of it has moved the needle. I've had 10 screening interviews this whole time and none were connected to any changes I've made.

The job market just is what it is. My theory: either I have to wait this thing out (the Fed is lowering interest rates; maybe that'll help) or make a drastic career change.

2. There is no silver bullet or hack. I made all those tweaks based on things I read on LinkedIn, Reddit, or Instagram Reels. Oftentimes, these tips sit in direct opposition of one another.

One TA person I know recommended I redesign my resume to be more visually appealing. About a month ago, a TA person from a company I applied to told me my pretty resume was insufficient. I don't overvalue the opinions of experienced recruiters or even acquaintances. They mean well, but there are no catch-all solutions.

3. Control my control-ables. I attack my search like a job. I clock in Monday through Friday 9 to 5, find listings, and send the best applications I can in the moment. (I even took Veterans Day Monday "off"!)

Are there dark days? Yep. Do I question my choices? All the time. Am I sure this is the right path? Hell no. Have I considered starting a smog check business? Absolutely.

It's frivolous to drive myself crazy trying to change results that are out of my hands once I hit submit on an application. Do your best to keep that energy.

4. Take breaks. The first — oh — five, six months, any moment I wasn't trying to find a job felt like a waste of time. Heavy guilt consumed me if I dared to stray from The Formula™. It took an exceptional amount of failure to conclude that my effort does not equal results. So F it: I'm allowed to take breaks.

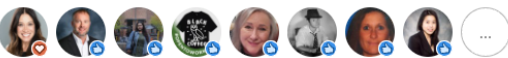
Sometimes my wife asks if I want to go run an errand with her. Or pick up the kids together. Or unclog the bathroom sink. I used to balk at such suggestions. Now I lean into it. It's made the bright side of unemployment (lots of spare time) a little more joyful.

5. What's the worst that can happen? It's a little delusional, but if I think about my worst-case scenario, what does it look like? This doesn't apply to everyone, but I have the good fortune to have a living parent in a paid-off house about 40 minutes away. That means if I burn through all the savings and run out of life-lines, we could always abandon our house/mortgage and move in with Mom. Not ideal, but doable.

A real worst-case scenario is health-related. But as long as me and my wife and kids can breathe air and scrounge food to eat, what can my unemployment really take away from me? Only comfort. And I'm stronger than losing my mind over discomfort.

Hopefully you are too.
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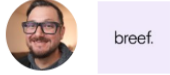


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