

# The Power of Laugh Therapy:

## Do you have some to share?

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**Getting fired is no laughing matter. Have you ever been fired? Don't think it will happen to you? Well, neither did I.**

Who are those people who get fired? At least a few of them look like me. I used to think that I was really in a select group and I felt good about that. Over 28 years in the golf business and only three jobs. I had a successful family with a wife and three children. I had been

the president of my local chapter and a leader in my church. All in all, I was doing pretty well; at least it felt that way at the time.

My career progression was steady. I started as an assistant golf course superintendent and was promoted when my boss moved on. After four years I went to work for the City of Fort Myers. There I was responsible for the maintenance of two courses. On my first day of work, I moved a sign off the floor in my office and noticed that it was covering a hole in the floor.

The Quonset hut building was not a state-of-the-art maintenance building. It was part of an actual barn. During my nine-and-a-half years with the city, much was accomplished. We rebuilt both courses. One of the rebuilds was complete with irrigation and tree removal. The Quonset hut was also replaced with a facility that actually had a proper area for equipment washing and garage doors.

I left a good job to take a better one. My new role would be to manage the entire golf operation for a developer and it would begin from the ground up. Five holes were under way when I started and that was it. No maintenance building was planned and I was literally the first person to know that we would actually need one. I was given the ability to make a mark on not only

the golf course and golf maintenance, and also the golf operations: from the name of the course to how it would operate.

Twelve years later we were doing pretty well with 48,000 rounds per year, 417 members and income above expenses by \$350,000. We experienced some hiccups along the way, but who doesn't? There had been a steady increase in play, memberships and revenue over the last three years. Much had changed, but the team I had assembled was responding to a lot of issues with all sorts of innovative ideas.

I have been successful professionally and I felt good about that. Was I a perfect employee? Well no, and those who know me realize that I can be independent and sometimes bull-headed.

I could be unconventional in my approach. Even with my not-so-positive attributes, I felt that I was in select company. Certainly, I was not a slacker who deserved to be fired.

That all changed on April 5, 2012. On that day at 2:05 p.m. I became one of the fired.

What happened?

Well, I would really like to know myself. It was a shock five months ago and honestly it remains that way today. What really happened is for others to say. I used to say that I didn't fire people, they fired themselves.

### Did I do that to myself?

Have you been where I am? Certainly, I am neither the first nor the last. I had sympathy for those who lost their jobs because of the economy. Now I really have "sympathy" for them.

One of the things you need to do when you get fired is move forward. It really seems pretty simple, but stuff does seem to get in the way. After the shock wears off just around the corner are anger, sadness, frustration, anger, disappointment, and anger.

I had landed a new job whether I wanted it or not – job hunting. And it did not pay cash or benefits. I wish I had some magic formula to solve the problem that I could pass along to you. The fact is I remain actively searching for my next professional opportunity. Here are some tips I that have been helpful for me.

**Own It:** The most beneficial advice I can give you is to embrace your situation. Own it! That ownership will help you manage the frustration, anxiety, disappointment and wonder that will pass through your brain.

**Take care of your family:**

The trauma of losing a job does not only impact you, but your entire family. It is so easy to hurt the ones we love. Remember that managing those immediate reactionary emotions so they do not negatively impact your family will be critical. Sticking together will never be more important. From my experience I can tell you that when I am down my wife can help me and when she is down I need to help her.

**Financial:** When you are not drawing an income, assessing your expenses becomes critical. I would encourage you to plan ahead for a worst-case scenario and make changes to your spending and saving habits now. Cutting back during a crisis will be hard, but earlier cuts in how you manage disposable income will help sustain you financially for a longer period

of time during a period of unemployment. It's called building an emergency or "rainy day fund."

**Get Physical:** Exercise can help in burn up anxiety and help you sleep. It can come in many forms from walking, running, biking, swimming and others. Exercise will help you physically, but for me the greatest benefit will mentally and emotionally. This will also improve your health.


**Be Intentional:** When I was working I had a pretty standard routine. It was easy to stay on task and focused on goals for my employer. When there is no reason to get out of bed it can be harder to create a routine. Being intentional about your time will be very valuable. I create a To Do list and cross off items as they are accomplished. Everything does not have to revolve around getting a job. You can schedule daily time to read, finish at home projects, exercise, make phone calls, and spend time on job sites. The specifics don't matter, but having a plan will help you continue to move forward. Spending (wasting) time looking backward is

tempting, but it won't get you where you want to go.

**One last thing:** TV will cost you time. It is easy, but you won't get that time back.

From personal experience hiring others, I felt I would be sought out as an employee. I have skills and experience that should be valuable. Unfortunately, it is a new world and getting a job depends on many factors that are out of your hands. So here are some more tips for being successful at job hunting.

**Coaching:** Seek out life or professional coaches. If you were lost, it would be natural to "Ask Siri" or look at a map. Coaches are trained to help you discover and market your personal assets. They have experience, which will be valuable for you. I found a local coach who was referred to me by a friend. I have also used a long distance coach who has counseled me on the phone. The Extraordinary Leader program is offered through CMAA and has been very valuable for me. Chose a coach you can trust and they will help you clarify your path forward.



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### Professional resume & cover

**letter:** The purpose of a resume is only to get you a second look as a candidate. I have heard many statistics, which say people will glance at a resume for only a matter of seconds before determining if you are out or will get a second look. It is worth spending some money to have your resume professionally formulated. The primary goals are to stand out and to appear to fit the job description.

**Continually refine your resume:** I have been told matching my resume with the job description will increase my odds of getting a second look. These goals will likely mean that you adjust each resume that you send out. Cover letters are just as important as the resume. You should determine who is reading them and attempt to personalize it or at a minimum address it to the correct person rather than address it "To Whom It May Concern." I have also been advised to try to bypass the HR departments and get to the decision makers. The human resource departments are only trying to eliminate candidates.

**Networking:** The best advice I received was to get out of the house and visit

people. The golf maintenance and club industry is not like other businesses. There are only a small number of professionals in the field. Countless times when working I have experienced something that I refer to as the phenomenon as "coop-etition." It is a combination of cooperation and competition. There are not many segments of business in the world today where leaders actively help other leaders from the competition. I am sure that you have all experienced it.

The golf business is a small family and many people have given me support. For those guys I will forever be grateful. Spending time with people has been therapeutic for me. The visits have also made me better prepared for my next opportunity. When you have been fired, it is easy to convince yourself that you are no longer in the group. Pulling back is just the opposite of what you should do. I know from experience that there are many people ready and willing to help. Help can come in many forms. Just enjoying a tour around a course can be an uplifting experience. In addition, maintaining your professional

relationships will widen the net of opportunity for finding your next job.

**Job Sites:** The Internet is a wonderful tool, but it has limitations. Being connected to an opportunity through a relationship will be helpful in getting you a second look. Sometimes in today's society it can feel like we are only a number. On the Internet that is actually true. Don't depend solely on job sites. Think of them as one more tool that you can use to find your next professional opportunity, but don't depend solely on them.

**Positive Attitude:** Your attitude is something you can control. It may be hard, but it's possible. It will help to be around positive people and in positive environments. Evaluate where you spend your time and whom you spend it with and make a change if it is needed. Spending time staring at your belly button will not get you a job.

**Laugh Therapy:** At this point I will leave you with one last piece of advice; find a way to enjoy some laugh therapy as I know from experience that it is surely the best kind. ■

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