

August 28, 2013

When I lost my public relations job in June 2008, I had no idea the world was on the cusp of the Great Recession. I was 55 years old and had been the primary wage earner for my family for virtually my entire adult life. I began to look for work right away.

As the months wore on, I applied for scores of jobs, but obtained interviews at only a handful of these places. Eventually, I began to expect that I lost the job the moment I appeared for the interview. The reason? I am not 30 years old. But I'm still capable and up-to-speed in my profession.

I was out of work for 4 ½ years. For at least two of them, I was desperately depressed. I was terrified due to the lack of income my husband and I were making. Both former professionals, we found ourselves subsisting on his social security checks.

Fortunately, tenacity is one of my major attributes. When some others may have stopped trying, I carried on with my job search. I supplemented our meager income with what freelance work I could find.

One day, a woman I'd worked with at my previous company emailed me that she has been reached out to by someone she'd worked with elsewhere was looking for a public relations manager. I interviewed at the company where I was pleased to see that my prospective boss and a large portion of the employees were clearly over 50. After having read in Newsday, that a person over 50 with a job gap has a seven percent chance of ever working again, I had found an age-friendly company.

I have been on the job now for ten months. It has not been easy. My critical thinking skills needed to be brought up to speed. My Microsoft Office skills were way out of date and on another version of the office suite. My stamina was non-existent as was my knowledge of the industry in which I was now working.

By the way, my husband, a former bank vice president and cancer patient, was also out of work. Eventually, he found work in a clothing store, making \$9 an hour and standing on his feet for more than eight hours a day at the age of 68.

My salary is the same at what I made in 2000 – but I thank God every day that I have it. It may take the rest of my life to rebuild the financial security I had six years ago. I lost that financial security because a new VP came in and decided he wanted to hire the public relations manager from his old company. I'm not vindictive but I did have only one thought when I heard that, two years ago, he lost his job: What goes around comes around.

Keep trying, be kind and persistent, and good will come to you. Lie in bed all day watching TV, don't try, be less than kind, march on Washington – and you'll get nothing. I know because I did those things, too. Obviously, none of them resulted in a job.

These are very scary times we live in. Although we may have choices, giving up is not an option.

Sincerely,

A.S.