

The search for a job begins and ends with you

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Staying motivated is always tough, but it certainly gets easier when you start seeing results. That's why keeping your spirits up during a job search can be extremely difficult. Candidates often face repeated rejection and rarely receive any feedback. A new study that focuses on finding work following a job layoff reveals just how important managing negative thoughts and effort over time are while looking for employment.

The research shows that having a more positive, motivational outlook had a beneficial effect on job pursuit, especially at the outset of the search. However, the more important influence on maintaining one's [job search](#) activities and increasing the likelihood of landing employment was the person's ability to stay energized and keep [negative emotions](#) under control over time. The study appears in the current issue of [The Academy of Management Journal](#).

"A person's traits provide the backdrop for self-management, but these findings show that the self-management strategies that people actually use make the key difference," said Ruth Kanfer, a [psychology professor](#) at Georgia Tech and one of the study's co-authors.

The findings also indicate that effective self-management during a job search becomes more difficult over time. As Kanfer notes, "searching for a job isn't like learning a skill, where maintaining a positive attitude may be easier as you see improvement with effort. Beyond landing a job, you get almost no feedback on how you are doing or what you might do

differently to improve your chance of finding a job. You submit resumes, make calls and get no feedback on your progress until you get a job."

She adds that to successfully sustain motivation over time, people need to become increasingly proactive. For example, candidates should seek increased social support and develop daily routines that can provide positive feedback and support [positive attitudes](#) toward the search.

The study conducted weekly assessments on self-management, job search and mental health among 177 unemployed people seeking re-employment over the course of 20 weeks. Participants spent an average of 17 hours per week looking for a job at the beginning of the study and reported a gradual improvement in mental health. By the fourth month, however, time spent on search had declined to 14 hours and mental health started to show a slight decline. Ultimately, 72 percent of job seekers found employment by 20 weeks.

Provided by Georgia Institute of Technology

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