

GETTING OVER SHOCK AFTER FIRING REQUIRES SOME SELF-REFLECTION

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By Andrea Wolf, Globe Correspondent, 12/15/02

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I was let go from my job as education director for a small nonprofit. I had been there only a year. The reason given was that I "didn't fit in," it wasn't a "good match." I was shocked. I had worked hard and had done good work, and I'd had no performance review or warning. I felt more like a girlfriend than an employee. The message was: "You're a great person, but hey, it's just not working out." As I've talked this over, I've found that many of my acquaintances have had similar experiences - fired after good performance because someone doesn't like them. They all seem to have gone on to other things. I have always thought that being fired was shameful, that this was about the worst thing that could happen in one's career. Am I wrong? Is this considered a normal part of the working world these days? How should I present myself to potential future employers?

It sounds like being let go from your job came as a big surprise. Did you assume that things were fine because you had no performance warning and everyone liked you?

It is hard to truly know how you were perceived by others without asking for professional feedback. There must have been serious questions and concerns around your "fit" in the organization. Sometimes the reasons are personality style and attitude. Unfortunately, it seems this was never directly communicated to you.

I suggest that you do some self-reflection by identifying and analyzing what you learned from this situation. Following are some questions to ponder:

- Did you go into the job with a clear understanding of performance expectations?
- Did you have a three - month review with your supervisor?
- Did you periodically seek feedback from your supervisor and colleagues on how you were doing in your new job?
- What was your working relationship like with your boss?
- What did you contribute to the job and how was it perceived?
- Do you think the organization was a good culture fit for you?
- Before accepting this job, did you assess the fit for you?
- Did you thrive in this work environment and use your best skills?

You ask if being fired is shameful and the worst thing that could happen in your career. Being fired is not a scarlet F on your chest, nor is it uncommon these days. Of course, it feels bad to be let go after one year, and it is a big loss to you.

I encourage you to thoroughly digest and learn from this experience, which will affect how you present yourself to future employers and the decisions you make. It will be important for you to come to terms with this layoff by getting some support.

You will need to practice what to say when asked, "What happened?" You can briefly state that after one year, you saw the position was not a good fit and decided to move on to other opportunities.