

5 ways to look after your mental health while job hunting

Looking for a new job can take up a lot of your physical and emotional energy.

With all the energy that goes into a job search, it's also an especially important time to take care of your wellbeing.

We asked SEEK's Resident Psychologist Sabina Read to share her tips on caring for your mental health and wellbeing while job hunting.

The building blocks of good mental health

"Everyone is familiar with the concept of mental health, yet it's easy to overlook some of the fundamentals of wellbeing when we are feeling stressed," Read says. "There are a number of key components to becoming and staying mentally healthy. However mental health is more than the absence of mental illness."

The foundations of good mental health are:

- experiencing positive emotions such as joy and satisfaction;
- connecting with others;
- feeling engaged with life which usually means tapping into our strengths;
- having a sense of meaning and purpose;
- setting and achieving goals (no matter how small);
- having a good routine (including being physically active and [getting enough sleep](#)).

"These are the building blocks of sound mental health and wellbeing," Read says. "Ensuring these are practiced at least some of the time while job hunting can help you celebrate your achievements and make you feel like you're making progress; while also helping you to cope when knockbacks occur."

Ways to care for your mental health during your job search

Read says with those building blocks in mind, there are positive steps you can take for your mental wellbeing while job hunting, including:

1. Connecting with others

It's common to feel isolated when you're looking for work, but the old saying of 'a problem shared is a problem halved' has truth to it. "You might feel heavy, hopeless or ashamed to reach out to

people while job hunting, but having conversations with family or friends, even if they're not about work, is good for your mental health," Read says.

2. Having a sense of meaning

"Think about what you are naturally drawn to, what you enjoy, your skills and strengths and move towards those," Read says. "Doing things that we love gives us a sense of hope about the future and builds up positivity. And those emotions keep us on track when we're looking for work."

3. Seeing challenges in new ways

"If we don't get a position or don't hear back from an employer, we often jump straight to thinking 'I'm not good enough'," Read says. "But these thoughts won't serve you as you move forward."

If you [don't hear back after an application](#), it's important to acknowledge it may be because the company has changed their hiring plans or there's been a hold up on their end. "Even though it's easier said than done, [try not to personalise rejections](#) from potential employers," Read says. "Focus on the things you can do to reach your goals; and what you can learn about yourself in the process."

4. Setting small goals

While your overall aim may be to secure a job, breaking it down into smaller steps can make it easier and boost your mental health along the way. "Set yourself one small goal to achieve each day," Read says. "When we reach small goals, it builds momentum; and we kick start a positive feedback loop to keep going and hit our target." Those steps might look like 'update my resume' then 'get a friend to look over my application for me' then 'send out two applications by the end of next week'. This list of [8 tips to make the most of your job search](#) could also give you some ideas.

5. Establishing a balanced routine

Having a routine where you're looking for work and applying for jobs, but also taking time for your emotional and physical health is imperative. "Exercising, as well as regular incidental movement should be part of your daily routine," Read says.

"Sometimes our focus is on job hunting through the week and then we promise ourselves we'll go for a walk on the weekend. But you can't put your wellbeing on hold like that. Make sure you take one small job-hunting action each day, set aside time to get outside and ensure you're getting good rest. Mental health, exercise and sleep go hand in hand."

Searching for a new job can feel overwhelming, and it can be challenging at times to keep the momentum going. Taking simple actions to like those outlined here can help you to ensure you have the energy to see your job search through, and most importantly, care for your mental wellbeing.

If you're finding things tough at the moment or are looking to learn more about mental health, including advice on how to stay well or guidance on where you can go for more information or to seek help, visit the [Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand](#).