



Career Management Specialists

Navigating Redundancy.

What the research says, and what helps.

A guide for anyone facing redundancy, anticipating it, or supporting someone who is.

Contents

01 This is harder than people often think	3
02 What changes, and what stays with you	4
03 Looking after your wellbeing	5
04 What the evidence says helps	6
05 Know your rights, and steady your finances	6
06 The practical side of moving forward	7
07 Where to get support	8
Sources and support	9

This guide moves from how redundancy feels, to looking after yourself, to what the evidence says helps and the practical support available. You do not need to read it in order. Use the contents above to find what is useful to you right now.

01 This is harder than people often think

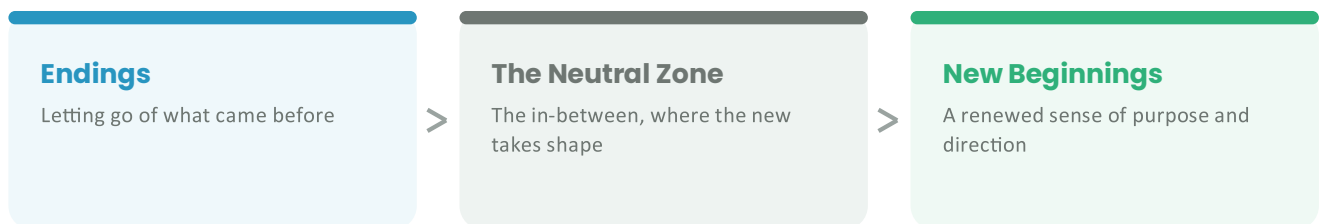
Becoming redundant, or anticipating it, usually hits harder than people expect. Psychologists who study job loss have found that the experience commonly triggers a grief response similar to bereavement. Shock, anger, sadness, identity confusion, and difficulty imagining the future are all common. These reactions do not arrive in a predictable order. Some people feel relief at first and delayed distress weeks later. Others feel numb before the weight lands.

The mental health consequences are well documented. Job loss is associated with significantly elevated rates of depression and anxiety, particularly in the six months after redundancy (Brand, 2015; Patton & Donohue, 1998). The grief response is real, and it is not weakness.

Layoff survivor syndrome, the psychological response of people who remain after a restructure, is also a recognised phenomenon with its own kind of distress. If you have not been made redundant but watched colleagues go, your reaction is also normal and worth attending to.

Understanding where you are: the Bridges Transition Model

William Bridges drew a distinction between change, the external event, and transition, the internal process that follows it. His model identifies three stages that people move through, each at their own pace (Bridges, 1991).



Endings. Every transition begins not with something new, but with letting go of what came before. The loss of a role can bring the loss of identity, familiar routines, working relationships, and professional certainty. Acknowledging these losses, rather than pushing past them, is what makes forward movement possible.

The Neutral Zone. The in-between period, where the old has gone but the new is not yet formed. It can feel disorienting. Bridges described it as the seedbed for new beginnings: a time of realignment that, supported well, opens the door to genuine change rather than reactive decisions.

New Beginnings. As clarity and confidence grow, energy moves in a new direction. This is not simply a new job. It is a renewed sense of purpose and identity, and it comes after, not instead of, the earlier stages.

Knowing which stage you are in can take some of the confusion out of how you feel. If you are in the Neutral Zone, the disorientation is not a sign something is wrong. It is a sign that transition is happening. The goal is not to rush through it, but to move through it with the right support. Someone experienced in career transitions can help at every stage of this journey, including the uncertain middle.

02 What changes, and what stays with you

Research consistently finds that the cost of redundancy is multilayered. People do not just lose income. They lose routine, daily structure, professional credibility, identity, a sense of control, and a workplace community. Loss of perceived control is one of the hardest elements to recover from, based on decades of work on self-efficacy (Bandura) and the longitudinal effects of unemployment (Brand, 2015).

For many people, the most disorienting piece is identity. When someone asks what you do, most of us answer with our job title. When the title is gone, something essential can feel like it has gone with it. The feeling is real. The fact underneath it is not. Your role is something you did. It is not who you are.

A useful distinction, drawn from career theory:

Your values and motivations. What makes work meaningful to you. What you will and will not compromise on. These belong to you.

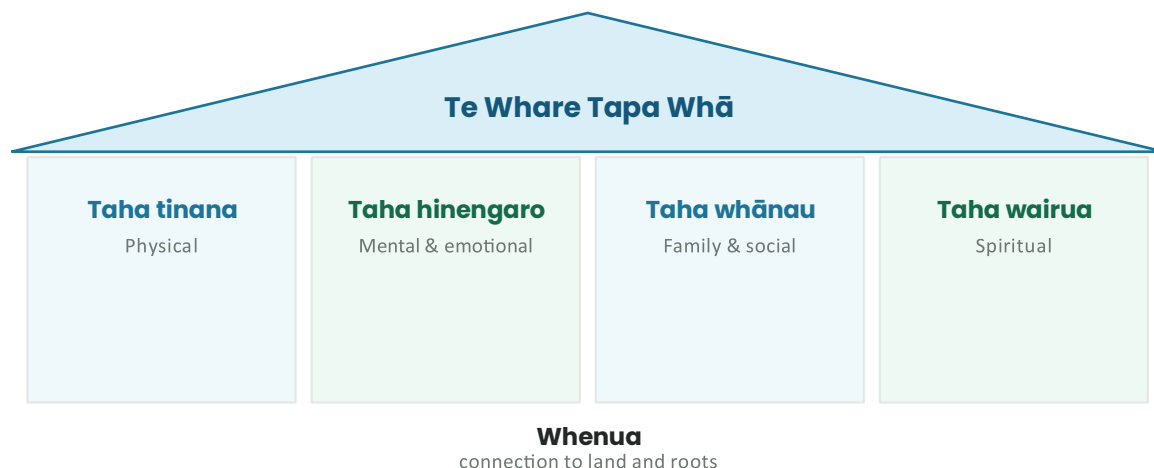
Your interests and focus. The fields and kinds of work you are drawn to. These also belong to you, and tend to be remarkably stable across a career.

Your skills and competencies. What you have developed through experience. These travel with you into the next role.

A redundancy ends a particular role. It does not change your values, your interests, or the skills you have built. The first useful move, before applications and before the CV refresh, is to remember which layer has actually been disrupted and which has not. A good career coach can help you work through this in a practical way, not only in theory.

03 Looking after your wellbeing

While you work out what comes next, your day-to-day wellbeing matters as much as your next move. A helpful New Zealand framework is Te Whare Tapa Whā, developed by Tā Mason Durie. It pictures wellbeing as a whareniui, a meeting house: four walls, each a dimension of health, standing on the whenua, our connection to land and roots. When one wall is weakened, the whole house feels it. Tending all four keeps you steady.



Taha tinana, physical. The body and its needs. Sleep, movement, and eating well are often the first things to slip after a redundancy, and among the fastest to help. A loose daily routine gives the day shape when work no longer does.

Taha hinengaro, mental and emotional. The mind and the heart: how you think, feel, and make sense of things. Naming the hard emotions, rather than pushing them down, makes them easier to carry, and clearer thinking tends to follow.

Taha whānau, family and social. Belonging and connection: the people you care for, and those who care for you. Redundancy can make people withdraw, yet whānau and community are protective. Let people in, and accept support when it is offered.

Taha wairua, spiritual. Often regarded as the most essential of the four. Wairua is about connection, identity, and meaning: your sense of who you are, your values, your whakapapa, and your connection to the land and to something larger than yourself. When work has carried much of your identity, this is the dimension that holds the bigger questions, and the one that can steady you while the others rebuild.

None of this asks you to get everything right. Small, steady attention to each wall, grounded in the whenua, is enough to keep you steady while you plan.

You do not have to manage it alone. A career coach can help you navigate your experience with sensitivity, and with the clarity and confidence to take your next step. If your employer offers an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), it usually includes free, confidential counselling, and access often continues through a restructure or for a time after you leave. Many people do not realise they have it, so it is worth asking.

04 What the evidence says helps

Three things show up consistently in the research on what helps people recover from job loss and make good next decisions.

1. Structured support, sought early.

The JOBS Program (Caplan, Vinokur, Price & van Ryn, 1989), among the most rigorously evaluated interventions in this field, has shown improvements in both reemployment outcomes and mental health when people receive structured support that combines practical job-search skills with attention to the emotional experience. The pattern is steady: the right help, sooner, makes a measurable difference.

2. Confidence in your own search.

A 2014 meta-analysis by Liu, Huang and Wang found that the most effective programmes build self-efficacy, a person's confidence in their own ability to do the search well. This matters more than the sheer volume of applications sent. Quality of search consistently outperforms quantity, and building that confidence is something good career support focuses on.

3. Time to think before acting.

People who use the period after redundancy to clarify what they actually want, rather than what they could plausibly apply for, tend to make better next moves. Rushing has a cost. Roles taken in panic are often the ones people are trying to leave again twelve to eighteen months later.

A few questions worth working through, ideally with someone who listens well:

- What did this role give me, beyond the income, that I would want to find again?
- What did it cost me, or ask me to compromise on, that I would rather not repeat?
- Which of my fears right now are practical, and which are about identity? They need different responses.
- If I had genuine freedom to design my next chapter, where would I start? Not which role, but what kind of contribution, what conditions, what life around the work.

Make space for these questions before urgency closes it, ideally with someone experienced alongside you.

05 Know your rights, and steady your finances

Alongside looking after yourself, two practical things are worth sorting early, and free support is available for both.

1. Understand the process and your rights.

A redundancy has to be genuine, based on a real business reason, and it has to follow a fair process. That usually means being consulted before any decision is final, being given the reasons and information behind the proposal, and having a real chance to respond. New Zealand has no automatic redundancy pay: whether you receive any, and how much notice you are owed, depends on your employment agreement, so it is worth reading yours early.

If something does not feel right, get advice sooner rather than later. Employment New Zealand (employment.govt.nz) explains your rights in plain language, Community Law (communitylaw.org.nz) offers free legal help, and a union can support you directly if you belong to one. Some steps, such as challenging an unfair process, have time limits, which is another reason not to wait.

2. Steadying your finances.

A drop in income is stressful, and it sits underneath much of what the wellbeing section describes. A few early moves make it more manageable.

Check what you may be entitled to. Work and Income (workandincome.govt.nz) can help more people than expected, including some with savings or a working partner, so it is worth checking rather than assuming you will not qualify.

Make a simple plan for the gap. sorted.org.nz has free budgeting tools, and MoneyTalks offers free, confidential financial guidance on 0800 345 123, by text, or web chat.

Talk to your bank or lenders early. Many have hardship options for mortgages, loans, and bills, and these are far easier to arrange before a payment is missed than after.

06 The practical side of moving forward

Alongside the emotional work, redundancy calls for a set of very practical tasks. Doing them well, and not alone, is often what shortens the gap to the right next role. Good outplacement support covers the practical ground as well as the personal:

Career assessment and direction. Structured self-evaluation and coaching to clarify what fits, so the search points in the right direction from the start.

CV and cover letters. A clear, current CV and tailored cover letters that show your strengths to a real reader, and to the screening tools now sitting in front of them.

LinkedIn and online profile. Making sure your professional profile is current, findable, and consistent with your CV.

Job-search strategy. A focused plan for where to look, how to reach the hidden job market, and how to use your network well.

Interview preparation. Practice and coaching to help you tell your story with confidence, including for internal roles.

Decision support. Help weighing options, including choosing between an internal role and redundancy, with someone neutral alongside you.

These are the things people often try to do alone, under pressure, in the weeks after a redundancy. They tend to go better when you have an experienced coach in your corner.

07 Where to get support

Asking for help early matters more than most people anticipate. Research consistently finds that people who get appropriate support sooner, recover faster and make better next-stage decisions.

CareerEQ has worked with people across Aotearoa New Zealand on career transitions for over twenty years. We pair experienced one-to-one coaching with evidence-informed tools, starting from where you are.

Ask your employer whether CareerEQ support is available through their existing outplacement provisions, or contact us directly.

Get in touch

We are here to support you. Reach out to start a conversation about what comes next.

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CareerEQ

This guide is for general information only. It does not replace personal advice from a qualified mental health professional, career counsellor, or employment lawyer.

Free employment advice

Employment New Zealand (employment.govt.nz), or your local Community Law Centre (communitylaw.org.nz).

If you need support now

Talk to your GP, your employer's EAP if they have one, or contact 1737, the national helpline, free call or text any time.

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