

Helping the whole family cope

Dealing with job loss, ADD and more

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Losing a job could be one of the most stressful situations a person may go through in life, especially now, in an economy where finding a new job may seem impossible. The emotional fallout does not just affect the individual, too; it is also dealt with by a spouse, children and other family members.

Louise Levin is familiar with the stages of mourning that follow bad news like losing a job. A licensed marriage and family therapist with a private practice in Westport, she is experiencing a surge in clients who have become part of the growing job loss statistics and are turning to her for help.

Losing a job can shake your entire existence and even lead to post traumatic stress syndrome, she said, which is why Levin attempts to demystify the mourning process so that individuals and family members know what to expect as they navigate through the uncharted emotional storm.

"It's not if it happens," she said of the mourning process. "It's when it happens."

And, Levin says of what her services have done for her clients, "It's calmed a lot of people down."

As the former vice president of

marketing and communications at Chase Private Banking, Worldwide, and past vice president of marketing and communications at East New York Savings Bank, Levin said she knows about her clients and the environment they work in day-in and day-out.

She doesn't deal solely with job loss, though. Levin has also made ADD an integral part of her practice. She is the founder of ADD Student Leadership, a nonprofit foundation that supports the social, emotional and self esteem issues involved with ADD/ADHD in pre-adolescents, adolescents and their families.

Included in her arsenal to cope with and combat ADD/ADHD is a four-and-a-half day program in the wilderness of New Jersey. "If you can learn to survive in the woods, you can survive anywhere," she said.

Mainly, though, Levin works from her Westport office with adolescents, teaching them to take responsibility for their ADD/ADHD — Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Once Levin gets their attention, she helps adolescents get solution-focused instead of problem-focused. She calms them down, instills them with a sense of empowerment and, in the process,



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shatters the stigma attached to the disorder.

She has taken the cognitive behavioral therapy approach because she believes it to be the best way to combat the condition. ADD/ADHD is a neurological disorder in the prefrontal lobe — the executive branch of the brain — which regulates impulse control, among other functions. Levin notes that ADD/ADHD is hereditary and then asks one to imagine the challenges this can pose for both parents, in their marriage, and their children, in school and at home.

Like job loss, it can be paralyzing and destructive.

That is why Levin, who holds a master's in marriage and family therapy as well as in education, takes the family approach to therapy.

"Marriage and family therapy is based on a systemic approach that looks at how not just the client, or 'identified patient,' is affected by issues and concerns, but how those issues and concerns impact the whole family," she said. "The point of family therapy is to assist the whole family system to resolve the issues that are negatively affecting every ones' well-being."

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