

Aviation- Coping with Redundancy



This guide can be downloaded from: kurahumanfactors.com/aviation-coping-with-redundancy

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The following are the thoughts of two Kura Human Factors supervising peers, Laurie Ling and Christo Hudson.

Laurie recently retired from flying commercially after a career spanning many of the ups and down our industry has seen over the past three decades.

Christo was made redundant when his airline folded in reaction to Covid-19. They both have a background in training and Wellbeing support.

What they have to say may not work for everyone; they are not claiming it is best practice or the only solution and some things they suggest may be challenging due to the restrictions we find ourselves living under. However, it is their view on what has worked for them and their colleagues.

Covid-19, and efforts to protect against escalation of the pandemic, have wreaked havoc on the world's economy. This has particularly affected the Aviation Industry. Globally, many airlines are facing a bleak future, with some even financially close to collapse. Even those with healthy balance sheets have announced plans to reduce their operation and make big personnel cuts, as they introduce structural changes that will affect all staff.

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW YOUR RIGHTS. IF YOU ARE IN THE UK, ACAS HAS SOME GREAT ADVICE [HERE](#)

Whilst the industry will survive, albeit in a new form, this recovery is likely to take some time. Business travel and the leisure industry will likely return at different rates, and it is too early to say what shape the industry will take in 2021 and beyond.

Crew will therefore be facing widespread uncertainty; flying is more than a job to most. It is often the achievement of a dream. A passion and a 'lifestyle'. Having achieved the goal of becoming a pilot, after much hard work and study, those in their early career may have the financial burden of training loans and for those longer established in their career, will have a lifestyle based upon a salary that they may find hard to maintain.

The Psychological Effects of Uncertainty

Uncertainty can play havoc with our thinking. Our survival instinct is constantly taking in information and then judging what is safe, initially triggering a ‘fight, flight or freeze’ response. In trying to make sense of our situation our brain seeks to ‘fill in the gaps’. One of the downsides of the phenomenon of human consciousness is our ability to worry about the future. We know the future exists, but *we don’t know what’s going to happen*. We may try to process inaccurate or untested theories of what may happen, and without confirmed facts default to ‘worst-case’ scenarios.

When our certainty is challenged, our stress- response is triggered and anxiety increases. *In some cases, the anxiety caused by a lack of job security may pose a greater threat to one’s mental and physical health than the process of redundancy itself.*

Once we have an answer, we can act, see what happens and stop living in anxious anticipation. Often, it is “not-knowing” that is worse than the reality.



Practical ways to deal with uncertainty & dissipate anxiety

- *Don't believe all you read!* – company communications may be particularly biased. Social media can fuel speculation and theories. If you are in a union, follow any advice given. Carefully consider the facts, they will unfold over time and will change as the situation moves forward. Things may not be so bad as they seem now.
- *Discuss your situation* with family and friends – seek support – it's normal to not feel okay, but it's not okay to lock away your feelings. Fear of job loss can lead to a wide range of emotions but eventually you will reach a stage of adaptation. This is part of a process of resilience.
- *Believe in yourself* – It might sound corny, but it works! Avoid behaviours that will keep you in a cycle of negativity.
- *Get up at a regular time* – Routines benefit wellbeing.
- *Do not isolate yourself* – get outside, seek out adventure and fresh air.
- *Make a conscious effort* to surround yourself with people who support and inspire you.
- *Never go it alone* – get help navigating the grief-like feelings and help creating a plan to move forward.
- If your sadness/anxiety escalates into depression, seek professional help immediately.
- Make use of any existing *Peer Support Programmes* available, especially if you are unsure how to access support personally.

What if the worst happens?

- *If the worst does happen and you are made redundant this can be a painful process. It may be temporary and in due course there may be an opportunity to return to flying, but it also exposes you to a world of opportunities you may have otherwise overlooked. It will be one of the few times in your life when you are handed a clean slate and given time to re-evaluate your career. You have the time to think carefully if you would like to keep doing what you were doing, change fields, start a business, or retrain.*

Entering a period of Re-adjustment & Reflection

“take the opportunity to reconnect with things you never had time for while working”

With the loss of your job you will lose structure that you are used to and may have been relying on. It is natural for this to feel overwhelming, and the lack of structure could feel deeply unnatural to you. In our daily work we are not used to feeling out of control. *It's okay to feel lost*, but instead of immersing yourself in self-pity, try to take the opportunity to reconnect with things you never had time for while working; hobbies you let slip, volunteering, friends, or family. This will reinforce the fact that your identity is more than just your job.

It will help in re-framing your self-image ensuring you are less dependent on “what you do” and more about “who you are”.



Consider the changes being muted by your company. How might you adapt to new ways of working? It is tempting to feel angry or frustrated, and as humans we have an unhelpful desire to attribute blame. It is more important to focus on what these changes might mean for you, your lifestyle and income. Focus on how you might manage these changes. Acceptance of a new reality is difficult, so talk it through with family and friends.

How might you personally adapt?

Grief and Redundancy

Being made redundant is a grieving process:

- Shock and denial is completely normal. Even if you were expecting it, you may feel confused and helpless.
- This may then be followed by a second stage which includes a period of anger and frustration as you contemplate the “why!?”.
- Feelings of being overwhelmed and helpless are very common. This is where you must try to avoid episodes of depression by recognising the signs and putting practical barriers in place, such as routines and exercise. Consistently remind yourself that things will get better.
- You will almost certainly experience a period of “bargaining” where you try to explain why it happened, possibly reaching out to others to share your story.

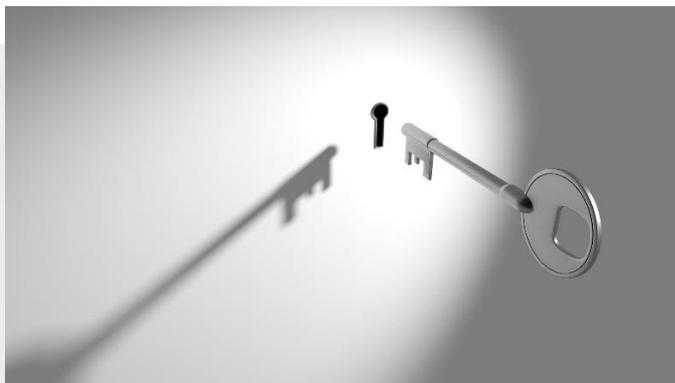


Creating a plan of action.

The following practical guidelines will help in navigating the process:

- ***Make a realistic assessment of your financial situation.*** If you think that you may be out of work, set out all your necessary expenses and exactly what you need to survive. Talk to lenders, mortgage companies to re-negotiate deals and be brutal about cutting out 'discretionary spending'. Be honest with lenders, do not be embarrassed and tell them about your situation. They may well be sympathetic and help you. Involve your family in this process and brainstorm ideas.
- ***Get your paperwork in order.*** Documents, licences, logbooks, training history, certificates and medical all need to be easily to hand. These are essential when looking for a new flying job. Consider whether you are willing or able to change location or country.

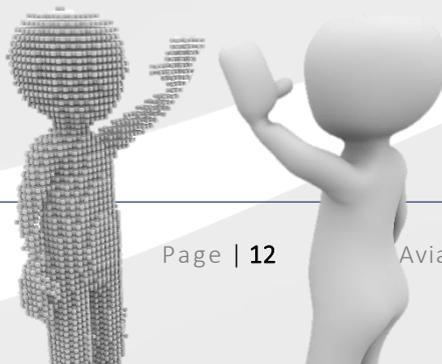




- ***Create new CVs and covering letters*** – one for pursuing any flying opportunities that may occur, and another for any non-flying jobs that you may wish to apply for. In the latter case, whilst the technical aspects of flying may be irrelevant, the ‘competencies’ will be transferable. Pilots exercise a leadership role and your managerial skills should be referenced.
- ***Sign up to recruitment sites.*** Market yourself and seek career guidance if needed. Networks are often the quickest method to employment. Social media sites, such as LinkedIn, can be a useful adjunct.
- ***Create a messaging group for yourself and your colleagues*** who will be going through the same situation. Some will be prominent on the group; some will use humour to express themselves and some will unfortunately disappear completely as they opt to deal with the situation in a different manner. Use the group to post job adverts and support each other.

- ***Use your technical skills to help you through the process.*** Much like if you were experiencing an emergency in the aircraft, try and move from the “unknown” to the “known”. Just as you would use a checklist during periods of high stress, consider writing down your tasks and tick them off when completed. It can be cathartic. Communicate your thoughts with others for their viewpoint like you would with cabin crew and ATC in an emergency. They may have an insight or different outlook on a problem and help give you perspective on your situation.

Your mental health and wellbeing during these unusual times is of the utmost importance. Whilst you may feel like the world as you know it is collapsing around you, try to remain positive. Resilience is a process not a quality, and as a pilot you have already demonstrated it by making it onto a flight deck. Remembering what you have achieved in your career will allow you to build on those strengths and adapt to your new reality.



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1.noun: a) Human Factors training delivered across a range of industrial and commercial sectors. b) Innovative solutions to aviation peer support.

2.verb: a) To introduce CRM and help develop safety management systems in safety critical commercial and healthcare environments.

3.adjective: a) BEST value; b) BEST practice; c) BEST Human Factors training; d) BEST CRM.

info@kurahumanfactors.com

