

NH HEALTH

Five tips about staying positive while unemployed

New Hampshire author Kelly Clark interviewed 15 New Hampshire residents who unexpectedly lost their jobs while mid-career, to discuss how they managed to maintain their well-being. Here's what they say helped them.

By [Amanda Gokee](#) Globe Staff, Updated October 8, 2024, 11:22 a.m.



Job seekers line up outside the New Hampshire Works employment security job center on May 10, 2021, in Manchester, N.H. MARY SCHWALM/ASSOCIATED PRESS

In her new book, “[Getting Back to Work](#),” New Hampshire author Kelly Clark interviewed 15 Granite Staters who unexpectedly lost their jobs while mid-career.

Despite the tumultuous circumstances, these individuals managed to maintain their well-being, according to a general health questionnaire called the [GHQ-12](#), which Clark administered for her doctoral dissertation on the topic.

“I wanted to know, what are they doing that is enabling them to stay positive under these very dire circumstances?” she said.

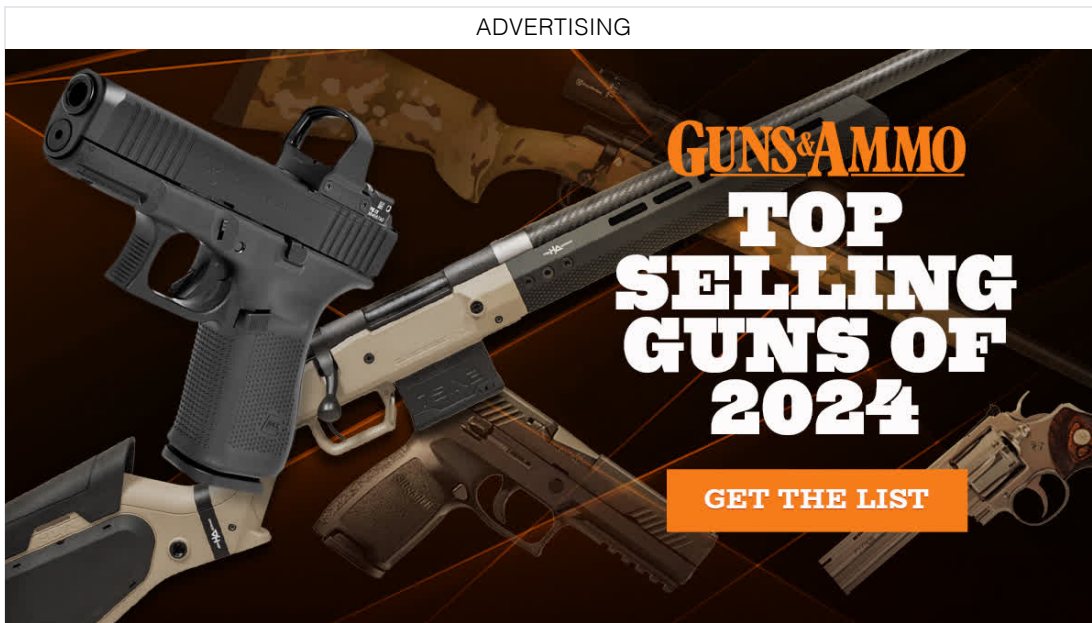
Unemployment remains low in the Granite State compared to other states — at about 2.6 percent in August, according to the [latest report from the New Hampshire Employment Security, Economic & Labor Market Bureau](#) — but it has gone up from 2 percent in May, reaching the state’s highest unemployment rate so far this year.

The average unemployment rate was 3.9 percent for New England states and 4.4 percent nationwide in August. According to the data, the labor force includes 780,800 New Hampshire residents, with about 23,330 of them unemployed.

Clark pointed to recent layoffs at [Southern New Hampshire University](#), [Catholic Medical Center](#), and the [University of New Hampshire](#) as evidence that even low unemployment rates don’t mean total insulation from job disruption.

Here are the five strategies that Clark found helped people stay positive:

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- 1. Maintain a structured schedule:** One of the subjects in the book continued waking up at 5 a.m. even after he lost his job. Others had an end-of-day ritual to step away from their job search, like going for a walk or making dinner with a partner.
- 2. Stay engaged in meaningful activities:** Clark interviewed a woman who described rediscovering her love of art during unemployment, while others started volunteering or creating an income stream from a hobby, like dog training.
- 3. Build mental strength:** By reframing negative thoughts, people worked through fear and anxiety brought on during unemployment to avoid paralysis. "To allow negativity to enter my process, or to get angry or upset, only makes the situation more difficult," said a man named John in the book, who had been unemployed for 24 months.
- 4. Conserve resources:** Clark said people prioritized saving money after losing a source of steady income. For some, that meant reassessing their living situation, like turning a house over to family members to reduce expenditures.

- 5. Access social support:** Without the social interaction provided by work, these individuals found other sources of help and encouragement, including from family, friends, and religious communities.

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