

The IIJ Layoff Life Line Resource Guide

Before:

- **Protect your data: create backups of your work**
 - **RESOURCE:** [The Motherboard Guide to Getting Laid Off](#)
- **Tie up loose ends with healthcare and other benefits:**
 - Exhaust your FSA balance (buy a ton of bandaids and sunscreen)
 - Determine whether your state requires your employer to pay you for unused PTO
 - If possible, refill prescriptions, schedule doctors appts, eye exams, or teeth cleanings before your insurance expires.
 - **RESOURCE:** [COBRA Continuation Health Coverage](#)

During:

- **Know your rights:**
 - **Check in with your union reps:** union workplaces require greater transparency throughout the layoff process
 - **RESOURCE:** [How Newsroom Unions Intervene When Members Get Laid Off](#)
 - **As per the federal [W.A.R.N. Act](#)** companies are required to provide 60 days notice of a mass layoff; some states require even more advance notice
 - **RESOURCE:** [The W.A.R.N. Act Fact Sheet](#)
 - **[As of 2023](#), employers cannot require you to sign non-disparagement agreements as a condition of severance**
 - **Over 40?** You have additional rights. You can take up to 21 days to decide [whether to sign a severance package](#), or 45 days if it's a mass layoff.
- **Negotiate everything:**
 - **Severance is negotiable**, it never hurts to ask

After:

- **Taking care of yourself**
 - **It's okay to rest.** Layoffs are traumatic. If your finances allow, there's no shame in taking a beat to recover.
 - **Find community with other journalists.** Join affinity groups such as the [National Association of Black Journalists](#), the [Asian American Journalists Association](#), the [The Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists](#), the [Indigenous Journalists Association](#), the [National Association of Hispanic Journalists](#), or professional groups such as the [Association for Independents in Radio](#), the [Online News Association](#) or the [Institute for Independent Journalists](#). But don't stop there - form communities with colleagues who are going through the same thing on Slack, WhatsApp or other platforms. Consider assembling an accountability group.
 - **Find connection outside of the industry.** Spend time with friends/family and reconnect to your larger community. It's not uncommon for our jobs in journalism to feel like a part of our identity. Remind yourself of all the other parts.
- **Looking for work**
 - **Get a portfolio website.** It can be simple, but you need something. [Authory](#) offers a self-updating portfolio; the PR firm MuckRack allows journalists to [create a portfolio](#) also. If you already have one, update it with your most recent work. Same goes for keeping LinkedIn updated.
 - **[Consider assembling an accountability group](#):** A small community of peers keeping one another motivated and on track.
 - **Update your resume to be "your most exciting news story"**
 - **Find reliable work.** If you need to earn steady money, prioritize that, even if it's no longer full-time journalism work. You're still a journalist even if you're only working on one project a year.
 - **Network with positivity.** Reach out to everyone you know to catch up – you never can predict who will lead you to work. Over time, you'll discern which connections are interested in mutually authentic relationships. Find a hype group to help you prep to be your best self in demanding situations like informational interviews or conferences.
 - **Fine tune your freelance skills.** Even if you're not interested in freelancing long term, freelance work can help fill gaps in your income while you look for stable work. [The IJ](#) offers free and low-cost resources for learning how to find clients, pitch stories, manage your small business and more.

Additional Resources:

- [The IJ Layoffs Survey](#)
- [The reality of layoffs, beyond the national numbers](#) - CJR
- [Part 1 of Yowei's Layoff Series](#) - Proxy

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