Job Hunt: Episode 5 – "Home Alone and Out of Work. ***How to Avoid Depression When Unemployment Drags On"***

Intro (theme music plays)

Host Johnson: You've been unemployed for so long, it's hard to remember getting up and going in to work. You're not feeling too hot but it doesn't have to be that way. It's time to change that attitude and get you back on track. All next on this edition of Job Hunt.

Hey Everybody, I'm your host Tory Johnson. This recession has a lot of people sitting at home feeling depressed. When unemployment drags-on for months or even years, how do you maintain a healthy state of mind so you can compete for a new job. We have some experts here to help.

Dr. Eileen Wolkstein, a career consultant. Job coach and trainer, Lucy Cherkasets and psychologist, Dr. Ellen McGrath. Thank all so much for being here.

Eileen, let me start with you. For a lot of people like we said, days turn into weeks, into months and time sort of just passes so quickly. And you say: it's really essential to plan your days. How do you do that?

Wolkstein: You plan as though you are going to work and really create your own structure for yourself, without the structure of getting up and going to work and having a place to be at a certain time. So it's really important to discipline yourself to get up in the morning at the normal time as though you were going in to work. To get dressed if you're an exerciser, to go out for a run or take you dog for a walk. Come back and make sure you are up and ready have a healthy breakfast and get planned for the day, the week and the month for all that you want to accomplish in terms of: being in touch with people, applying for jobs – networking and getting out there. If you put that into a weekly schedule and a daily schedule, you can have activities for the day, that you really can walkthrough without having to think for

the moment: “What am I going to do?” It’s there for you to begin to work through and that makes it much easier.

Host Johnson: Absolutely. Ellen let me jump to you, for a lot of people it is incredibly easy to become depressed when you are looking for work and the time just passes. You have 3 specific steps for people to avoid that depression and to avoid falling into that trap.

McGrath: Well Tory the first thing is, if you are feeling depressed its normal. If you’re isolated and you’re paralyzed, it’s not. And there’s a great deal that you can do, the first one is to change the thinking from negative to positive. But of course everybody is like: Oh sure, how do you do that? So we love to play with light switches, we pretend that we are really flipping a switch. From negative dark – no light to positive and we actually have people doing this (Hand gestures). Playing with their own light switches, to remind them that they have the power to change negative thinking into positive. And the second one is we use action all the time to create energy, like Eileen was talking about. If you’re not staying active, you lose energy and you get depressed. We ask you to do: One action strategy a day that you normally wouldn’t do and take it like a vitamin. So it’s like a vitamin a day. And the Third one is connect, connect, and connect. People think just sending something out on the Internet is going to bring back what they need for a job. We know 85% of successful job getting, comes from connecting to other people. So that becomes absolutely key and they’re thousands of ways to be able to do that. It doesn’t work by sitting around in the echo chamber of your apartment or house where the depression just gets bigger and bigger. Thinking about yourself but not getting out and thinking about others.

Host Johnson: And Lucy: You talk about going out there and connecting with other people, a lot of times that is filled with rejection, or someone is accustomed to hearing “no’s” and so their hesitant about getting out there. For those that are forcing themselves out there to do it, you are advising people about how to put on that happy face or how to make that great first impression. What are some of the ways for some people to put on their best self?

Cherkasets: Of course well Networking is one of the things you can do is to secure some good job leads. What we advise our clients to do is to first get a business card printed. To ensure you are not going to networking events or a business meeting with your resume in hand. This is an opportunity mainly for you to reach out to people in your industry or an industry where you want to be to get some more information. So maybe there are trends, perhaps you are looking into publishing and you learn that someone wants more of a digital focus. You can actually use that information that you’ve learned from your conference to fine-tune your search. Another thing that you can do is use a lot of the social networking sites to find the right people that you want to connect with. Make your list and target the people on your list and you will achieve great success.

Host Johnson: So it’s about getting out there and doing it. Eileen, you know the interesting thing for me when I was once fired, was I hid – I thought I don’t want to see anybody, I’m just going to hide in my apartment and somehow I thought the job ferry was going to come to me with that offer. And it didn’t happen but it’s embarrassing a lot of times to get out there. Someone calls you and says: “let’s have a

slice of pizza" and you just say "no-no" or you don't even answer your phone. How do you get around that? How do you get around the tendency to just want to hide?

Wolkstein: Well that goes back to planning your day, planning your week and what Ellen has said in having plans to meet people to get out as part of your weekly routine and even your weekly routine of connecting with somebody. It can be casual; it can make you feel better. It can be for the purpose of meeting for a job or networking. Be very specific, to really remember that the isolation is really not going to accomplish nothing- it's just going to drag you down and that there is nothing to be embarrassed about particularly in this economy. There are so many people out of work, I know people feel embarrassed, but you're in good company.

Host Johnson: Because there is safety in numbers. It's not just me.

McGrath: And to build on that, there is safety in partnership. One of the techniques we've learned during this job market that has been so helpful is to choose an accountability partner. So it can be a friend, relative, co worker or someone outside of work and ask them to hold you accountable for doing what's on your schedule and being able to get in there and make connections. Because sometimes, like you were describing Tory: "We are too tired and too scared and we actually do feel ashamed. The accountability partner is our cheerleader and holds us accountable to keep our structure, to keep us going and it works.

Host Johnson: I want to ask you about that. So this accountability partner, who would make a good person? How do I know that I am asking the right person? A lot of times a person can be in a sense more of an enabler ("oh I feel so sorry, I understand, I don't want to be hard on you, I know this can be difficult")

McGrath: That's not the right person; your accountability partner is someone that knows how good you really are at things, believes in you and really cares about you. That is (someone) your cheerleader and also knows how to do some tough love. So it's really like alright: "This is not helping you, you gained one hundred pounds, you are smoking three packs of cigarettes a day, your bouncing off the walls and your waiting for a response from Monster.com" and that's not working. Write out a structure and a plan, like they were talking about and they make sure to call me at the end of the day or email me to let me know what you got done.

Host Johnson: Sure, I think that's so important and so valuable for somebody to have and that can do that for you. Lucy let me ask you this: for a lot of people, there's embarrassment about how do I answer; typically we are a society or culture that thinks when we meet somebody for the first time, the polite thing to say is "Oh where do you work, what do you do"? And a lot of people cringe thinking, "I'm in transition or I lost my job" There is a tendency to not really know how to couch it because so often we're wrapped in our identity of our job; we like to say where we work or what we do. How does someone respond to that?

Cherkasets: There are two different ways to respond. If you have been laid off, the market is more understanding now. Employers, potential employers and your network is going to understand that your

company has had to reduce their workforce and that you're out of a job. So that's a safer question. Where people get into some trouble is they become nervous if asked why you have lost your job and if you have lost your job for cause. So you want to stay positive and think about the experience of what you've learned and perhaps explain that you did not see eye to eye with your boss but what you took away with it is you are looking for a company that would be on par within your way of working. Stay positive and don't bring the rejection again into it, keep the details out but you do want to be honest. It's very important to know while you can spin your answer, you need to be honest because your employer will check or can check.

Host Johnson: Sure, keep it honest. But I also think it's important like you said to keep the bitterness out of it. And also it helps to say: "My whole department was eliminated". That immediately lets someone know that it wasn't just you, you weren't the only one – "My department was eliminated". "I loved working there" as opposed to "If they only ran the place better, I'd still be employed". You don't like somebody who's that complainer.

Wolkstein: Along those same lines, I'd like to think about and encourage people to think about where they are going to rather than from, so that you can change the conversation from where you came from and the job that you lost to this is what I am working to do, this transition is very important to me. It has really allowed me to really consider what I want to do and it has allowed me to move forward and make positive changes. The "to rather than from" becomes a very important mind set, that I encourage people to focus on and it gives you control.

McGrath: Right because you are controlling how you think and that's going to control what you achieve. We are all people that work with people that have been unemployed for a short or long time. We could really say that this is one of the biggest opportunities of somebody's life. If they've lost a job: typically and many times, they didn't like it that much anyway. And they are really upset about losing something they hate or didn't really like. And if they just flip that switch, they are able to create something that really matches for them. It's really important to be able to take a look at that and see great opportunities. It's just a temporary loss turning into a great opportunity.

Host Johnson: The beauty of the pink slip. Would you say, that it's important now Ellen to release that negativity. I think it's really hard sometimes for people to move forward in their job search, when they have anger towards that boss or company that it prevents them from seeing that light and seeing positive opportunities.

McGrath: It's critical Tory, because you are going to attract what you are. Therefore, if you're angry, bitter and negative you're not exactly going to be appealing to people. And the job market is very tight, so they are going to want to go with the positive energized ones. It doesn't matter if you're not the perfect match a lot of times it's the energy you're giving out. So the important task is getting rid of the down lows and negative feelings. Go beat up pillows, go scream at people, do some things and come see people like us for one or two sessions. We're not talking about therapy. We are just talking about getting some coaching, to get back on track and to have a way to down low the negative, so then when

you actually come out and your ready to work with people are positive, energized, you are active and optimistic.

Host Johnson: Speaking of positive and energized, give me that one final tip on how do I go out there with that gusto? How do I wow them?

Cherkasets: Remember to get back into the drivers' seat. Pretend that you are shopping and interviewing them and always remember why you are distinctly special for that job, and why you should be hired. Use visual examples: show, don't tell.

Host Johnson: You have to believe that about yourself.

Wolkstein: I look at it like, having a vision for yourself. What do I see myself doing? You can really embrace that vision, it gives you something to talk about, to aspire to and to try to make that vision real (That's really helpful).

McGrath: Make a list of your best strengths, get other people who know you well to make contributions to that list. Read it every single time, before you go in front of anybody or go outside and also remember that this is a chance to bring out your best, not your worst. Its up to you to do it.

Host Johnson: Excellent point. Now we would like you to hear from someone, who is part of the continuing series in the Daily News called Hire me, in the your money section of the paper each Monday. Karen Spiak worked as a print and web designer before she lost her job in December of 2008.

Karen Spiak: My name is Karen Spiak and I was a creative director at my last job. I've been looking for work for 14 months. I lost my job in November of 2008, due to budget cuts. I get up at the same time everyday at 7:30/8:00. I, um get something to eat, start my job searching and take a break mid-day to go work out at the gym, have a light lunch and job search again until sometimes 7 at night. But that's what keeps me grounded. I have the support of friends and family, and I have the gym so if I work my routine, I hold up surprisingly well. I think when I don't go to the gym, is when I feel more blue and need to get my endorphins back. So that's why it has become an integral part of my day.

(Have you made any changes to yourself while looking for work?)

Karen Spiak: I tried to look at the current opportunities in my situation and found that I have the time now and the resources to expand my skill set, and learn new design programs/languages. So hours of my day are spent developing my skill set and I feel more marketable, then I was a year ago and I take that as a positive thing.

(Any advice to others who are in the same situation?)

Karen Spiak: My advice for people who are unemployed for the moment, is that the situations that we find ourselves in is unprecedented and it's not even a national problem, it's an international financial crisis that we are in. So my advice would be: Not to blame yourself. Not to think that it is something that

you did wrong or that you're unworthy and really try to find the positive aspects of the current situation and know that it will turn around, hopefully at that time we will be stronger for it.

Host Johnson: Karen is obviously filling her time; she is doing a lot of stuff. What strikes you most Eileen?

Wolkstein: One of the things I liked is that she is exercising. If she goes to the gym, that allows her to connect with people. If you don't have money to go to the gym, go outside and walk, this will get you out of the house and get you involved. The economics of long-term unemployment is really a critical issue. It's important, if you can't find a job immediately to do free lance work. I suggest that she try free lance work and anything that they she can do immediately as they continue their job search, that gets them connected with people and eases up some of the economic challenges that people feel, from long term unemployment.

Host Johnson: Sure. Now Lucy I know one of the things that impresses you is that someone continues to build their skills while they are out of work.

Cherkasets: Absolutely. If you don't have the skills, take a course. For instance, go pick up a book or do some online courses. There are lots of resources available in the city at this time.

Host Johnson: So everyone can be building. Ellen, when you look at Karen, what wisdom do you give to her?

McGrath: I feel that Karen is doing a wonderful job doing what works. She is staying positive, she's keeping structure, she exercising and she is building skills. What I'd like to see is that she is keeping positive energy, by connecting more during that work day that's she is talking about and probably by getting out and volunteering, giving something back so that she sees direct pay back for what she's putting out.

Host Johnson: So it's not just about being at home, going to the gym by on your own. It's about building a connection with other people. That's going to ultimately help or potentially introduce her to her next employer.

Wolkstein: Even a temporary job will do that, it gives you my skills, connects with people and also expands your network.

Host Johnson: One of the good things for her is that temporary hiring is on the rise right now. It's not all that difficult, certainly not impossible to find a temp job.

Cherkasets: Staying busy, will help her Stay positive.

McGrath: Daily dose of connection, like having an apple a day will help her to feel much more connected to what's outside, all the possibilities and would be more likely to find them.

Host Johnson: Alright, that's all good advice. I know it's difficult for people in Karen's position; it's difficult for people like that. So I know she and others will certainly appreciate it. I appreciated you being

here. Eileen Wolkstein, Lucy Cherkasets, and Ellen McGrath. That's really solid advice for those who are struggling with the emotional stress of unemployment. So thanks very much to all of you.

Now if you're in a position to offer Karen Spiak a job, you can contact her through our website nyc.gov/jobhunt. We'll feature another Daily News Hire Me profile next week.

Here's something interesting: The 100 years old city resource, that offers training for women. It's called the Grace institute and its courses are free for women of all ages and all backgrounds. It's on 2nd avenue and 65th street. Their mission is self-sufficiency and employability. They offer many types of business training. Visit the Graceinstitute.org or call them directly at (212) 832-7605.

Many companies are using web-camera technology to interview candidates instead of meeting them face-to-face. If it happens to you, you want to be ready. Trainer Bill McGowan of Clarity Media Group here in NYC, shows a young candidate, the do's and don'ts of interviewing through a computer web-cam.

Bill McGowan: Employers realize the print to page really doesn't tell them an awful whole lot. To get a better sense of this person, the web-cam can be a very effective first round of interviews to weed out and find those 6 best candidates that you can then bring in for a face to face. A web-cam is a device on your computer or your laptop that allows video transmission of what used to be a phone call or an instant message. It allows you to be seen by the other person. In a web-cam interview the employer now has an opportunity hear your answers to their question in real time and make judgments about you that way.

Have you ever done one of these before?

Libby Segal: No I have not.

Bill McGowan: Good, there are just a few things I want you to keep in mind in terms of where to put the computer (imaging and all that stuff). Rather than have just a plain white wall behind you, you may want to add some color, a little depth. Think about sitting at least arms lengths from the screen (that's perfect). The camera has a little too much headroom here, you look like you're too low in the frame. Most laptops on a desktop are going to be that level, so just take anything and just prop it up a little bit, it creates much more flattering angle. You see we lost all that headroom there. In an ordinary job interview, you have the ability to break the ice and read the person. In a web-cam interview, there's the technology and for some people that can be a real hurdle. There needs to a finite set of strategies and skills, in order to be able to put your best foot forward in these web-cam interviews.

Every time it's your turn to answer, I want you to ignore your instinct to look at her and to look into the camera and that's going to create the eye contact you need. You're on camera so being facially expressive, is totally fine. When we are listening to the question sometimes we have a neutral facial expression. I don't want to have you grin ear to ear; I do want you to be looking at her with an interested look on your face. All right Lucy, why don't we dive in and ask Libby some job interview questions.

Cherkasets: Libby, Good morning. You've been at your current role for over a year no can you tell me a little about that and what you're doing there.

Libby Segal: Right now I am working on television production. I transcribe a lot; I work on editing a little bit here and there and I write little promo movies.

Cherkasets: How's it going at your network? I ranking are very height our ratings are good

Libby Segal: it's going very well right now. Our rankings are very high and are ratings are good day to day. So, I like it.

Cherkasets: In the last year, what are you the most proud of?

Libby Segal: I'm most proud of putting together the edits for various they project. I put together all the edits and the fadeaways and what not. I'm really proud of that.

Cherkasets: Why should I hire you?

Libby Segal: I'm hardworking, I believe that I have a passion for learning that other people don't have. I like to go into something, learn it and use right away.

Bill McGowan: You did a real nice job with that. Overall, I thought your whole demeanor using interactive technology was really good and you seemed comfortable. I was want you to go to a job interview like this, over a webcam by being able to come up with an example of how you are hard-working or motivated.

Host Johnson: A web-cam interview isn't quite the same as meeting the recruiter face to face, but if you follow Bill's advice, you can give the company a good sense on who you are and that's the first step to getting hired. Meanwhile the city is working to create 1700 new jobs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and 40% of them are going to be green-energy jobs. The expansion is part of the city's 5 borough economic opportunity plan, to create jobs for New Yorkers and to implement a vision for long-term economic growth. A 60,000 square foot greenhouse is planned to manufacture eco-friendly products. You can learn more by visiting nyc.gov and searching under Brooklyn Navy Yard.

When you're young and just starting out, getting your dream job takes patience and a whole lot of hard work. Here is that story in person times two. Kristy and Katie Barry are identical twins, who came to New York City to become journalists and they are not going to give up until they make it happen.

Katie Barry: When I first came to New York, I just assumed there would be jobs all over the place. I mean, I knew that people were losing their jobs in _, But I thought, you know I'm young, I'm fresh and I'm willing to work hard. I certainly did not think it was going to be easy. Yes you do need a career and something to be proud of, but you also have student loans, cell phones and rent, which are basic human needs.

Host Johnson: Even with degrees in Journalism the Barry twins, never reject a job just because it sounds goofy.

Kristy Barry: Some of the odd Jobs we have now are: I dog-walk here and there, I'm starting pedestrian counting for a marketing company, that wants to know how much traffic is coming down the sidewalk. You stand there and you count people. I think we just diversify our activities.

Host Johnson: Katy did try out for Brooklyn Roller Derby, so she could write about it for a sports website. But when she didn't make the team it was just a minor setback. Every night they tend bars to help pay the rent, but by day they are sending out resumes.

Kristy Barry: Sometimes when I am sending out so many resumes, my computer might freeze up a little bit. And it saying to me: you know what, I'm tired-give me a rest.

Host Johnson: But suddenly, they get their next big break covering the national pillow fight championships in Toronto.

Kristy Barry: its fun they all have their profile and their pictures taken with the tough guy pose, with a pillow over the shoulder. If you see these fights, they're serious, gangster and in a boxing ring.

Kristy Barry: They're tough chicks. It's pretty embarrassing, how did you break your nose? "In a pillow fight". I got hit by a pillow.

Host Johnson: And if they manage to survive the pillow fights, an even bigger deadline looms for the twins: The Annual Outhouse Races in Michigan.

Kristy Barry: I was looking at some of the outhouses and some of them were really funny. Do you want to participate?

Katie Barry: I think we need to focus on the actual event. It's going to be icy and it's not going to be on the grass

Kristy Barry: They wear helmets; I mean how fast do you go sledding in an outhouse? You're just going across a flat surface. How many people do you see hurt themselves, racing on an outhouse?

Kristy Barry: Prevailing theme is I won't give up, she won't give up and she doesn't let me get down nor do I let her get down. It's not like: NY was so mean and we have to run back to the hills. Not giving up, not going anywhere and we're going to try hard.

Host Johnson: Kristy Barry, continues to freelance, writing a blog on the Vancouver Winter Olympics and Katie is interning for the U.N. press office.

Next time on Job Hunt, it's not just young people being hurt by the tough job market. What if your over 40 and don't know how to fit into the new work-force? We've got the rules of the road that you won't want to miss.

And if you want to ask me a question, log onto nyc.gov/jobhunt and I'll do my best to help. While you're there, check out the details for our "Job advice call-in event", that we are hosting with the Daily News. I'm Tory Johnson and I'll see you next time on Job Hunt.

URL: http://nyc.gov/html/nycmg/nyctvod/html/home/jbht105.html