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Re: Issues specific to workers over 45 years of age seeking employment or establishing a business following unemployment.

From 1994-1998 I worked for Mission Employment in the Blue Mountains running training programs for people 40-63 years old. I trained them in job skills to prepare them to re enter the work force as nurses to work in Aged Care Facilities. The programs were 95-100% successful in assisting people to gain employment.

I ran similar programs with other target groups. From the 40 plus groups there are particular traits that stood out. They are:

1. Most had suffered a major crisis e.g. sudden unexpected death of spouse or death of mother, or serious financial problems.
2. Some had taken Retrenchment packages believing it would benefit them and found insurmountable problems in seeking new employment.
3. All found it overwhelming to get a new job at their age.
4. Most found it hard to have any personal confidence after many rejections in job seeking.
5. They loved being with a group of people their own age to retrain
6. Many had unresolved Grief Issues that they did not recognise and some had gone to extra ordinary lengths to distance themselves or protect themselves from moving on in their Grief. This issue stands alone as the greatest challenge this age group had to overcome. The people I trained included those who had good skill bases, had run businesses, had been successful in their work life but Grief had stopped them in their tracks.
7. Solo mums were the easiest group to train.
8. Mums returning to the work force after being at home for 10-20 years were the most resistive to training.
9. All put out maximum effort in being trained.
10. Group dynamics were such that they supported each other till all the class got jobs (class sizes were 12-15).
11. A year after completing the course and going on to employment, some returned to former paths of employment or went to higher education.

My comments in dealing with this group are: they need more than just training. They need personal development recognised by the funding body. They also need life issues counselling. Many times I felt that although the training was the focus and needed to be, it was the least I was doing in seeing them re establish their lives. As a trainer working for a charity it was a big ask. My last comment is that it is worthwhile

targeting this age group because they can remain self sufficient to retirement and want to. It is their preferred option.