

## How to spell rejection? J-O-B

I decided recently that I'm going to stay a junior forever. The college life is for me. No worries, no fears and most of all, no rejections.

Friends of mine, recently graduated and/or graduating in May, have been enduring the rejections that my staying in college for eternity would help me avoid. I'm speaking of the dreaded job hunt.

I've seen my friends' rooms and apartments. The crumpled want-ads strewn across the floor, the dozens of applications waiting to be filled out and the bulletin boards camouflaged by a collage of Post-it notes, all scribbled with illegible phone numbers. And in the middle of it all sit my friends with their sad little rejected faces.

They were once optimistic, confident, hopeful. Then they spent five months attempting to find jobs. How do you spell rejection? Can you type that? At 60 words per minute? Start up the mental-health van; we're going for a ride.

Nothing can kill a person's self-esteem like a heaping spoonful of rejection. And there's no better way to get a dose than trying to find a job. Oh, they try to sweeten the mixture with polite letters trying to let you down easily and phone calls saying they were quite impressed, but darn it, they just found someone "a little" more qualified. Well, thank you oh-so-very much, but is that going to pay a phone bill?

It seems the "lack of experience" line has been quite popular among my friends. "Well, we've looked at your application, and we're very impressed, but it seems we've found someone with a little more experience. But we'll keep your applica-



**Heather Lampe**

tion on file in case a position would become available."

Words on paper just don't do the above line justice. My luckiest friends will hear it on the phone. The words are spoken with that distinguishable accent of pity. After they hear the "not enough experience" line, it's time for some Academy Award-winning acting.

"Oh, that's all right. I understand," my friends say. "Thank you anyway for considering me." This, when they really mean, "Die, scumbag. I didn't want your stupid job anyway. I hope your office building burns down."

All I really care to know is how a person is expected to gain experience to get a job when no one will give you the job to get the experience. Let me ask that again, "How are you expected to gain experience to get a job when no one will give you the job to get experience, because you have no experience?"

My friends do have job experience. Unfortunately, it's the kind that's acquired from part-time, menial crap jobs that one gets to pay for textbooks and macaroni and cheese.

When you're trying to find a professional job after college, experience at a movie theater

selling greasy popcorn and Milk Duds is not going to do it for you. Most Fortune 500 companies looking at prospective applicants don't equate a qualified person with someone who can whip up malts and chili dogs.

But I think these companies need to take a second look. People who have babysat and spent countless hours attending to sticky little children (who at age 4 still can't conquer the concept of a toilet), I consider hard-working. And people who've worked in restaurants, cutting onions and tending to lard-dunked french fries, I consider dedicated.

Interviews tend to be frightening also. I've read article upon article on interviewing tips. Always be on time, they say. Yes, always be prompt so you can sit and wait for an hour for the pompous jerk in the big office.

There are other tips: look the interviewer in the eye, speak clearly, dress neatly, ask questions, smile, etc. Interviewing seems to be much like dating — just a lot of kissing up, smiles, cologne and the possibility of rejection.

Nope, not for me. I'll continue to tell my parents excuses like "my adviser really did tell me that Clogging 101 would go towards my major. Gee, Dad, I'm sorry. I guess that means I have another semester, but this time I'm positive that History of Cheesemaking 400 will work as a elective."

"Come on, you know I want to graduate."

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## Save term limits for private sector

Some years ago, I enrolled in the Founding Fathers' School of Citizen Politics. Believing that it's a good idea to rotate people in and out of public life, I signed up for term limits.

Well, maybe it's a perverse streak. But just as the whole country has come to favor this plan, I'm having second thoughts.

I've begun to suspect that the term-limits law is just another entry on a growing list of mandatory items — the balanced-budget amendment, the three-strikes-and-you're-out laws — that are taking over public life.

With these laws, people believe that they are taking power by taking away the power of representatives, judges and even other voters to use their own discretion. It's as if we trust no one, not even ourselves, to do the sensible thing.

The congressional debate is being led in equal measure by long-term incumbents and brand-new freshman. The incumbents apparently need a rule to make them leave. The freshmen seem to believe — despite the evidence of their own election — that voters can't do-it-themselves.

Meanwhile the citizens who approve of term limits include that majority of Americans who don't even vote. Their only act of citizenship is registering an opinion in a poll — not going to a polling booth.

So the main argument these days is between those who are saying 12 years and you're out and those who are saying six years and you're out. But the argument in my own head has switched from politics to life. It's not just an argument about when people should be forced to leave, but about when they should choose to leave their post, job or role.

I've often wished that drug companies would develop a home-testing kit for burnout. Perhaps we need a CAT scan to discover the lesion that develops when the most important part of a job has become keeping the job. Surely there ought to be a blood test to know when we have lost the enthusiasm, the willingness to take risks, that may have launched a career in the first place.

There are many people outside the Capitol sitting in jobs they've outgrown, seats they've outworn, fighting to keep work they no longer want — out of fear. Many of us are like actors between roles, absolutely sure we'll never work again. Along with job insecurity, there's a bottomless



**Ellen Goodman**

supply of personal insecurity.

I have a colleague who once took a job as an editor and wrote a list of five things she would never do. When she had done three of them, she left. That's a wise list for anyone to write down at the moment of hiring or inauguration.

About three years ago, when a buyout was offered at my own workplace, some took the money and ran. But everyone who was eligible had to rethink his or her own life.

Watching people leave was a bit like watching friends get divorced. It was a challenge to our own commitments. The rest of us had to consider why we were staying. Out of fear? Stick-in-the-mud-ness? Or was staying right for us? Was there more we wanted to do?

These are questions that occasionally stump a politician during an interview or debate. Why do you want to be re-elected? But these are questions that everyone should ask in their own job review. Even when they are surrounded by people who regard them as lucky, they may come up with a surprising answer.

It's absolutely true that members of Congress in so-called safe seats can lose touch, grit and energy. It's also true that some get wiser as they get older and more secure.

Public servants don't get tenure; we already require the job review called an election. But term limits? I don't know too many workers — public or private — whose loyalty and performance would be enhanced by the promise that whatever they do they'll be fired.

So as the prospects for mandatory term limits grow, my enthusiasm for this blunt instrument withers. I would prefer a more discreet tool. What would happen if every office-holder who was burned out got out? That would be the turnover of the century.

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## Bumps and flab not in vocab

I, Cindy Lange-Kubick, being of sound mind and flabby body, hereby vow to disassociate myself forever from my cellulite.

I will no longer assume personal responsibility for any of the fatty deposits on my backside.

The next time I bend over while wearing tight shorts and my daughter wrinkles her nose and says, "Uh, Mom, your legs — they look like prunes," I will graciously accept her remark as a compliment of sorts.

And this summer when my son again informs me that my bathing suit isn't covering my derriere and, that instead of getting a different swimming suit, perhaps what I need is "a new butt," I will not run into the bathroom in tears and then snarf down a 16-ounce bag of Lay's potato chips (as if that's going to make my fanny smaller).

Today I promise — with all 10 of my loyal readers as my witnesses — never to buy another loofah sponge. Never again will I stand shivering in the shower rubbing my thighs raw with a stiff piece of dried-up sea life.

I will not do it. Instead I promise to love and cherish the dry, dead, bumpy skin that covers my lower extremities.

Starting today, I refuse to discuss body fat on long-distance phone calls with my sister.

"How ya doin'?"

"Oh, I'm fat, I am soooo fat."

"What do you think about the balanced-budget amendment?"

"Oh, I'm fat. I am soooo fat."

I'm pretty sure I had a perfect



**Cindy Lange-Kubick**

body in my last life, and that this transient physical form that I am now manifesting is just a bad case of karmic retribution for the unabashed vanity I exuded during my incarnation as the Venus de Milo.

Anyway ... from now on I will attempt to profess the integral beauty of my flawed physical humanity in a daily ritual of affirmations, proclaiming, "My body is beautiful. I am perfect as I am."

Of course this technique only works if you go nowhere near a mirror in your underwear.

(Actually I believe cellulite is a manufactured phenomena, a joint venture between the diet and fitness industries. Cellulite-forming molecules are deposited in all low-calorie foods, creating the need for Thigh-Masters and the Buns of Steel video series.)

Today, in a womanly rite of freedom from fat obsession, I will burn the Miracle Thigh Cream card that I found on my windshield last fall. And I will include in the pyre any and all references to weight, calories and the ideal woman that may be lurking around my home.

So next week when the long-unanticipated Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue arrives in my mailbox, I will hermetically seal it and deposit it in a locked metal box, lest I am tempted to preview the suits and risk a full-blown 34A-cup-induced depression.

I refuse to again come down with a case of Ellephobia — a rare but growing mental disorder, the symptoms of which include a person's refusal to leave the house in the summer for fear of running into Elle McPherson or someone of her ilk wearing a thong bikini at the neighborhood pool.

My normal technique for dealing with the start of bikini season has been to frantically begin attempting to tone and sculpt my body about the first of April.

I'll spend several weeks stair-stepping, leg-lifting and bun-squeezing only to give up in despair after seeing no visible results by the summer solstice. And then I spend the rest of the season wrapped in a striped beach towel, trying to convince my children of the joys of moonlight swimming.

"No, we can't go the pool now, but the sun will be setting soon."

This year is going to be different. This year shall be the year of cellulite acceptance, saggy breast exaltation and big-butt bravado. An official proclamation by the governor or his proxy is in order. See you at the pool.

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**Mike Luckovich**

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