



Employee Assistance Program

Managing Anxiety when Returning to Work

COVID-19 has challenged our sense of security and control. Returning to work represents a return to normal, but it may not be without its own causes for anxiety. Finding a balance between personal wellbeing, work environment, and responsibilities is important.

Continue to follow recommended measures to prevent the spread. Take care of yourself and others by taking the necessary actions at work (washing your hands often, staying home if you're sick, and maintaining social distancing), as well as in your daily interactions. If the kind of work you do needs additional precautions, discuss necessary changes and follow the instructions from your manager.

Don't be afraid to make suggestions. If you come up with more ideas outside of the recommended safety measures, bring these up to your manager. By becoming more involved, this can provide a refocus of your thoughts and put you in a more optimistic place during this transition. These could be beneficial to your workplace and create an easier transition for the rest of your team.

Keep communication open. Be honest with your manager if you need certain arrangements (working from home for longer or working in a solitary space away from other staff members). Even if your manager cannot accommodate your needs exactly, most will do what they can. When you create an open line of communication, you can keep your supervisor informed on your day-to-day, and alleviate any apprehensions you may have about your work situation.

Be patient with yourself and your coworkers. In the aftermath of a stressful or disruptive event, it is natural to move at a slower pace while you adjust to new circumstances. If you have concerns that are keeping you from focusing (anxiety about shared space or fear over the spread of the virus), share these thoughts with your manager. They may be able to offer guidance or options for you. Also, keep in mind that returning to work from COVID-19 puts everyone in circumstances that are new and different. Be patient and trust that you and your team will find the old rhythm.

Take care of your mental health. Anxiety and fear are normal when you come back to work after a stressful event. If you realize that you are not able to manage these feelings, ask for help. There are various resources you can locate, including your employee assistance program (EAP) or additional professional support, to help support you.

Need help finding activities or groups in your area? Contact your Employee Assistance Program to speak to a Work-Life Specialist who can help with research and referrals.

References

Franco, F. & Gregg-Meeker, C. (2020, 11 May). Managing anxiety when returning to work after COVID-19 (A. Gaddis, Ed.). London: Workplace Options.