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Managing Anxiety When Returning to Work After COVID-19

COVID-19 has challenged many people's security and sense of control. Returning to work represents a return to normal, but it may not be without its own causes for anxiety. Finding a balance between your personal wellbeing and work environment and responsibilities is important. So, before and after your return to work, you should address any reservations related to COVID-19 that may affect your work duties.

Continue to follow the recommended measures to prevent spreading the virus. 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 propose additional suggestions. If you find yourself coming up with more ideas outside of the recommended safety measures, bring those up to your manager. This is a time where everyone must adapt to a new way of doing things—at work and home. By becoming more involved, this can provide a refocus of your thoughts and put you in a more optimistic place during this transition. So, go ahead and suggest your ideas. These could be beneficial to your workplace and create an easier transition for the rest of your team.

Keep communication open with your manager. Do you have children or an elderly family member at home? Or, do you have health conditions that put you at greater risk for COVID-19 infection, disrupted child care arrangements, or other concerns? 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, as well as 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 recover and adjust to new circumstances. If you have concerns that are keeping you from focusing on your work (anxiety about working in a shared space with other staff 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.

Keep in mind that returning to work from COVID-19 puts everyone in circumstances that are just a little new and different. Give yourself a little time to return to your former focus and full productivity. Be patient and trust that your team will find its 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.