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## **Refocusing at Work After COVID-19**

In many places, local orders to quarantine or stay-at-home are being lifted. Companies are making plans to resume operations. This will likely be a slow process that varies greatly depending on where you live and the type of job you have.

You may be excited, or even a little apprehensive, about returning to your workplace. Your workday may not look the same as it did before, and there will likely be new procedures to follow. For many, working from home was a new experience that required a big adjustment in how they performed their duties. Returning to work will be another adjustment. Here are some ideas that can help make this next adjustment a bit easier.

### **Familiarize yourself with your company's new procedures, and make a plan.**

Your work schedule or duties may not look the same when you return to work. Many companies will be making accommodations to continue to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As an example, this may take the form of split work weeks, where you spend part of your time in the office and part of your time working from home. Understanding what is expected of you will help you to meet those expectations. Having a plan for your week will help you keep track of when and where you are working, as well as what tasks you need to complete that week. Be sure to talk to your manager if you have any questions or concerns about the new policies or expectations for your job.

### **Create a checklist to make sure you have all the supplies you need.**

Take time to gather any work equipment that you need to bring back to the office. Make sure this is organized and ready to go the night before, so that you can grab it on your way out the door the next morning. Be sure to include things you might need to protect yourself, such as cleaning supplies to help sanitize your workspace, or protective wear, like gloves and a mask. Since you may be moving between work and working from home for a while, organizing a work bag for yourself could keep you from forgetting something important.

### **Allow yourself extra time.**

A morning commute is not really a part of people's lives right now, but it will be again. It may take some adjustments to your routine to get out the door on time to make it into work. When you do return to your workplace, allow yourself extra time for your commute. Keep in mind any new procedures for drop-off at your child care provider and any additional time you may need

for that. If you arrive at work early, you will have time to settle back into your workspace. You may want to clean or sanitize your area before you begin the day, or you may want to spend some time rearranging things to help you work more efficiently.

## It will be exciting to see people again face-to-face, so try to socialize mainly during break times.

Remember to keep social distancing measures in place as you return to work, keeping six feet between you and your coworkers when possible. The ability to talk to your coworkers face-to-face for the first time in a long time will be a tempting distraction from work for the first few days. Socialization is important and catching up with coworkers can ease the stress about COVID-19. So, while there's work to do, you can expect that most employers are going to initially allow a bit more time for people to reconnect as they come back to work.

## Adaptability is an important skill to develop.

By adjusting to life in quarantine, you have already proven you can be adaptable. The way you work and the tasks you are responsible for now may need to change to prevent the spread of COVID-19 or accommodate new business realities. Try to be understanding and remain patient with yourself and your coworkers.

## Take it one step and one day at a time.

Don't try to take on too much at once and become overwhelmed. Staying organized and focusing on one task at a time will help you get back into the swing of working at work. Remember it will take time to adjust to the new normal in your workplace. Don't try to rush yourself or others. Everyone will adjust to being back in the workplace differently. It is important to find what works for you.

## Practice meditation or mindfulness exercises.

The skills and techniques you learn from the practice of mindfulness or meditation can help you relax, reduce stress, and improve your focus. These techniques can bring you back to the present moment and help you calm a chaotic mind. This calmness will give you the focus needed to complete the tasks assigned to you. Taking a few minutes in the day to reset yourself may be just what you need to get through a particularly difficult task.

## Contact your employee assistance program (EAP) if you need help adjusting.

Be sure to take care of your health as you return to work, including mental health. This is a stressful time and transitioning back to the workplace can add extra stress. Your EAP is available to help you process these emotions and refocus. Additionally, your EAP can assist with locating various resources that may be helpful at this time, including child care and mental health providers.