

Returning to Work During COVID-19

Returning to work during the COVID-19 pandemic may have extra challenges. Some common worries during this time of change include:

- ▶ New procedures or protocols and how they may impact your work
- ▶ Worries about how to maintain social distancing or whether others will follow recommended guidelines for preventing spread of the illness
- ▶ Your own risk of contracting the illness, or of spreading it to your family

The uncertainty surrounding many of these issues may lead to feelings of stress or anxiety. The best way to cope with these feelings is to focus on what you can control. Areas in which you can make a difference include:

- ▶ **Safety guidelines.** Adhere to provided procedures related to wearing masks, social distancing, and cleaning the workplace. Encourage your colleagues to do the same.
- ▶ **Self-care.** Manage your physical health by eating well, getting seven to nine hours of sleep a night, hydrating frequently, and washing your hands often. If you take prescribed medication, stay on schedule. Follow your local health department and the CDC's recommendations for avoiding infection during the pandemic.

- ▶ **Conflict.** Differing views regarding returning to work, safety guidelines, or new rules may be a potential source of disagreement between colleagues. Avoid participating in gossip or getting caught up in conflicts over politics or personal beliefs. Keep your focus on the work and on following safety procedures as best you can.

In addition, the following techniques may help you manage stress and maintain your wellbeing:

- ▶ **Monitor your internal dialogue.** Recognize when you are caught up in negative thinking. Look for ways to reframe the situation and give it a more positive spin.
- ▶ **Write down your thoughts in a diary or "worry journal."** Writing will help you to look at your concerns objectively and separate realistic worries from irrational thinking. It's also a great creative outlet.
- ▶ **Avoid responding to challenges from a place of worry or fear.** Instead, draw upon your values and use them as a source of strength. Look for ways to grow from every experience.
- ▶ **Focus on the future.** It's normal to miss how things used to be. However, keep in mind that what you're learning now may help you grow in your career and create new opportunities for the future.

LifeMatters can help you cope with stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic and returning to work. Call 24/7/365.

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