

COVID-19: MANAGING THE STRESS OF RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE



This talk is for employees who are returning to the workplace following the reopening of companies that temporarily closed or implemented a mandatory work-from-home policy due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This talk provides information on how employees can manage stress they may have about transitioning back to work, as well as information on how employees can feel safe in their work environment.

Materials to have on hand:

- Face masks and gloves (if applicable)
- Cloth face coverings (if applicable)
- Hand sanitizer (if applicable)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hand-washing poster (if applicable)
- CDC coughing and sneezing etiquette poster (if applicable)
- Social distancing poster (if applicable)

Items for attendees to consider during the talk:

- What concerns do you have about returning to the workplace?
- Do you know the ways you can manage stress?

TALK

Are you nervous about returning to the workplace after the COVID-19 pandemic? Are you anxious about your safety while being around people other than your immediate family members for an extended period of time?

You may have mixed emotions about returning to work: You may be concerned about your own health yet feel relieved that things are slowly going back to normal. If you were infected, you may be frustrated that coworkers have unfounded fears of catching the disease from you, even though you aren't contagious anymore. You may have gone or be going through mental health challenges due to the loss of a loved one and are worried about your job performance.

To help ease your worries about possibly contracting the virus as we reenter the facility, we have put certain protocols in place to keep people safe in the work environment. Specifically, we are:

[Select the protocols in place at your facility, and elaborate as necessary]:

- Following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, procedures for employees who were infected
- Enforcing frequent hand-washing

Continued on page 2

Talk Date: _____

Location: _____

Supervisor/
Presenter: _____

Attendees: _____

Comments: _____

MANAGING THE STRESS OF RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE

- Enforcing social distancing
- Using face masks or cloth face coverings and/or gloves
- Disinfecting high-traffic areas frequently
- Providing cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer for personal workspaces
- Allowing flexible work hours
- Limiting the number of employees in the facility

[Go over the CDC hand-washing poster, CDC coughing and sneezing etiquette poster, and/or social distancing poster if applicable.]

[Pass out face masks, cloth face coverings, gloves, and/or hand sanitizer if applicable.]

Stress management

We understand that transitioning back to the facility can be stressful, and you may feel depressed, irritable, or withdrawn. Other signs and symptoms of stress to look out for are fatigue, muscle tension or pain, mood swings, trouble concentrating, and forgetfulness.

We are offering support for those who are stressed about returning to work, including:

[Select the offerings in place at your facility]:

- Daily check-ins with your manager
- Alternative work responsibilities and schedules
- Contact with an employee assistance program
- Contact with an occupational health service
- Yoga classes
- Meditation sessions
- Weekly presentation on managing stress

Additionally, here are some ways you can reduce and manage your overall stress levels:

- **Reach out.** Just sharing your stress with others can be relieving. Turn to coworkers for support, confide in friends and family, and build new meaningful friendships.
- **Practice self-care.** Exercise is a great way to let off some steam and get your endorphins going! It's also important to nourish your body by eating healthy foods, staying hydrated with lots of water, and getting enough quality sleep each night (aim for 8 hours).
- **Organize.** You can manage stress by setting priorities, developing routines, and maintaining an accurate calendar of commitments.
- **Break bad habits.** Although it is understandable to have negative thoughts and behavior right now, they can make your job more stressful. You can make stress easier to handle by setting realistic goals, thinking positively about your work, and focusing on things you can control.
- **Be mindful.** Mindfulness or maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of your thoughts can be an effective tool for reducing stress. When you practice mindfulness, you're trying to be fully present, aware of where you are and what you're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around you.
- **Explore therapy options.** Consider meeting with a counselor or psychotherapist to discuss your feelings. Professionals can provide you with useful advice and tools to help you manage your stress levels.