EASING THE STRESS
Of Returning To Work Amid COVID-19

As businesses and other organizations resume operations in the wake of COVID-19, they're welcoming back and reintegrating their workforces. Some employees are reentering their workplaces after working at home. Some are returning from furlough. And others, in roles deemed essential, never left.

These varying experiences, converging as the pandemic continues, have the potential for stirring up anxiety and tension. So, how can you, as a manager or employee, help make the return to work less stressful?

UNDERSTAND: EVERYONE REACTS DIFFERENTLY TO THE SITUATION

Some are fairly introverted and have really not been impacted by the COVID situation almost at all. They like to be at home.

Other employees are feeling stress due to financial hardship, having a sick loved one, concern about a loved one or themselves becoming ill.

BE THERE FOR OTHERS

It's important that we're available to team members, as team managers, supervisors, mentors, and more seasoned colleagues, to encourage people to watch out for each other.

Look for behavioral cues that could indicate that a team member might need a little more support, maybe even on a professional level, like counseling or EAP.

CUES TO LOOK FOR

- ✔ **Changes in attitude and personality.** A usually social co-worker who seems withdrawn or has difficulty cooperating with others.

- ✔ **Changes in appearance.** During this pandemic people have looked a little more disheveled, or just doesn't look quite as sharp as they used to.

- ✔ **Decreased productivity.**

During the COVID crisis, people who might normally be a 3 or 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 10, are saying, 'I feel like I'm at a 9, maybe 10, all the time. Stuff I normally do to bring it down doesn't seem to be working. What's wrong with me? Why am I so anxious all the time?'

We all need someone to listen and reassurance that you are not alone. Communicating may help them to know that you are feeling more anxious than usual, too.

TIPS FOR THE WORKPLACE

Here are some ways to help you and your fellow team members get back in sync as you get back to work:

Communication. Informing the team about procedures and precautions established "to protect everyone and still do our job. Also, anything to be encouraging can be helpful.

Regular team meetings are a key to maintaining the flow of communication, including opportunities for team members to share their observations, ideas, and concerns.

Reintroduce team building exercises. This can help everyone get back in sync and return to feeling like they're part of the same team.

Stress management. Encouraging team members to call on their support systems, such as family, friends, mentors, or other trusted advisors, to help them manage stress.

Finding constructive outlets outside work is also key to managing stress. Do something after work to help you refocus, recharge, feel good, unwind.

Checking with your employer about available resources, such as an employee assistance program, for helping you manage problems such as stress and anxiety.

Source: wwwpremierhealth.com

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