

COVID-19 RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE: LEADING THE TRANSITION

THE CHALLENGE

As team members begin to transition back to workplace after weeks of sheltering at home, leaders have an opportunity to set the stage for optimal reintegration by realizing:

- **Some team members may be excited to be back**
- **Some team members may feel uncertain and anxious**
- **Some team members may have mixed feelings**
- **Not everyone will respond in the same way**



It is normal for team members to have mixed reactions about returning to the workplace

Leaders can help team members adjust by remembering the following tips...

BE PATIENT

The COVID-19 threat and self-distancing measures have been a radical change from daily life that has impacted individuals and their families.

- ✓ **Remind the team it may take time to adjust**

GIVE PERMISSION

Even when change means returning to a familiar environment, change can be challenging. Many team members will have grown accustomed to the battle rhythm of home life in recent weeks.

- ✓ **Acknowledge that this change may feel stressful**

REMEMBER THAT “NORMAL” MAY NOT FEEL NORMAL

There will probably be enduring changes in daily life—so things may not feel like business as usual. There may still be social distancing measures in place, schedules may be altered, and teams may have to adjust to a new normal. These different patterns may throw teams off kilter at first.

- ✓ **Remind the team that this is the new normal for now, and that you are in this together**

MANAGE TRUST

Team members will need to count on one another more than ever to keep safe. Only when team members share a common understanding of what is expected will they feel comfortable with one another.

- ✓ **Make new group norms clear and precise to ensure consistency across team members**

RECOGNIZE UNCERTAINTY

Even with a return to the workplace, there will likely be an underlying uncertainty that life may shift again in the event that the COVID-19 threat resurges. Teams may feel on edge, distracted by life feeling unpredictable.

- ✓ **Be open about the impact that this underlying uncertainty can have**
- ✓ **Develop contingences with the team for a potential resurgence of the COVID-19 threat**

HONOR THE TEAM

While concerns about COVID-19 may remain, celebrate what your team has achieved

- ✓ **Mark the milestones in returning to the workplace**
- ✓ **Tell the team's story of COVID-19 to create a shared narrative**
- ✓ **Congratulate your team for successfully navigating the challenges of sheltering at home**
- ✓ **Acknowledge everyone's contribution to the team's effort to stay safe and productive**
- ✓ **Express gratitude to those operating on the front lines of the pandemic**

LOOK OUT FOR TEAM MEMBERS



SIGNS OF STRESS

Leaders may be in a position to observe signs of stress in team members such as

- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Conflict with co-workers
- Struggling with motivation
- Making mistakes on the job



REACH OUT

Leaders who have concerns about a change in team member behavior can

- Ask team members how they are doing
- Listen to the concerns of team members
- Validate team member reactions
- Consult with behavioral health officers and chaplains
- Support behavioral health treatment seeking

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

Leaders will be most prepared to help their teams transition if they are aware of their own experience regarding the return to the workplace

- Are you patient with yourself?*
- Who are you sharing your perspective with?*
- How can this be an opportunity to lead?*

**STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE
WORK WITH YOUR TEAM TO ANTICIPATE AND MANAGE THE TRANSITION**