

Returning to work as COVID-19 continues

As states begin to reopen, millions of people who were working remotely or furloughed are being asked to return to their worksites. While federal agencies and states are providing guidelines on how to make workspaces safer for workers, many people are hesitant to return to on-site work for fear of falling ill.

Following these tips can help ease any anxiety you may have about transitioning back to your workplace:

Learn about new safety precautions

Your employer may have introduced new hygiene and protection measures such as hand washing, temperature measurement, mandatory social distancing or schedule changes to reduce contact with others. Workstations may have been reconfigured, and your company may be working with reduced staff. Understanding what is being done to keep your work environment safe and potential impacts on your job and work responsibilities can be reassuring.

Focus on being a team player

Returning to your workplace offers you an unprecedented opportunity to create new dynamics with your coworkers and develop new ways of working. Being isolated, you may have focused more on your individual performance, and your workplace culture likely changed. Now is the perfect time to reset expectations, learn more about how your team works together and build new team norms. Make a commitment to publicly celebrating the successes of your team.

Practice safe social interaction

Being able to talk face-to-face with your colleagues for the first time in a long time will be a tempting distraction. Socialization is important; catching up with coworkers can ease the stress about COVID-19. At the same time, restructured worksite layouts may make talking to coworkers harder; more people may have to move about to talk to their neighbors. Keep a safe distance from others whenever possible.

Pay attention to how you deal with stress

Everyone is affected by this crisis in one way or another. Stress is triggered by many things, including coming out of isolation, returning to work, losing a loved one or knowing someone who has fallen ill, and worrying about childcare or finances. Stress can cause a wide range of emotions including anxiety, anger, sadness, irritability, guilt or confusion. These emotions are normal, and you can go through one or more of them on any given day.

If you feel stressed, talk to people you trust about your worries or call your program. There may be times when you don't want to talk; however, staying in touch with other people is critical to your emotional health. A supportive network can help you accept difficult emotions and manage them until they pass.

Take care of yourself

Body and mind are connected. When you feel good physically, you also feel better emotionally. Maintain a healthy lifestyle by sleeping well, exercising, drinking water and eating healthy meals.

Focus on being flexible and resilient

It will take time to get used to a potentially new work environment, so be patient with yourself. You have already had to adapt to changes during the pandemic; returning to work is yet another step. Everyone has the ability to build resilience and learn more about how to respond to adversity. Remember your strengths and successes over the past several months. Thinking about how you survived trials in the past will help you with today's challenges. Work to stay positive. Maintaining an optimistic, hopeful attitude these days can be difficult, but optimism is a key element of resilience. No matter how bad things may be now, remember that they will not last forever.

It will take time to adjust to the new normal in the workplace. Staying organized and focusing on a task will help you get back into the swing of work.

Help is available. Your program is completely confidential and here to help you and your household members 24/7/365. No situation is too big or too small. Give us a call or visit your program website to get started.

Source: Ledbetter, K. (2020, May 1). Returning to work post COVID-19 prompts stress concerns. Retrieved from <https://agrifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/05/01/returning-to-work-post-covid-19/>.