

Returning to work after COVID-19 – employee tips

Over the last few months we have established new ways of working. Many of us have been working from home with new routines and ways of adapting. Now it is time to start our transition back to the workplace environment and consider what the next phase will look like.

Your organisation will be providing information and guiding you and your colleagues on how they want to bring everyone back to work. Every organisation will be different, and it will be helpful for you to take an active role in ensuring a successful return to work for you.

Personal Changes

More time at home with our partners and loved ones may have highlighted some positives as well as perhaps some negatives in our relationships, family lives or work lives. Is there anything you want to change in your personal life when you create your new routine?

- ◆ **Relationships** – perhaps you feel closer than ever and have enjoyed your partners company during this time. But perhaps you have experienced a more challenging time and had more conflict than normal. If this is the case, you are not alone with many couples experiencing conflict during this time. Whatever your situation, reflect on the last few months and think through any changes that you would like to make for the better. Now is a great opportunity to reset and implement changes you may have been putting off for some time. The same can be said for your family relationships. Reflect on the positives and the negatives and decide if you would like to make any changes moving forward with your family life and connections.
- ◆ **Work** – this challenging period might have prompted you to consider if you're doing work that is fulfilling and that you enjoy, or if perhaps you are wanting a change in role or simply a better work life balance. Think about how you can implement some positive changes into your working life and what you need to be able to achieve these changes.

Habits and routine

What has changed for you since COVID-19? Have you made any positive changes to your daily routines that you would like to keep? This could be an opportune time to implement longer term positive changes into our lives. You could consider some of the below areas to establish a new routine:

- ◆ **Exercise** – since being socially distant have you established a new workout routine or daily exercise that you would like to continue? This could be as simple as a building a daily walk into your routine before work or during work with a colleague. If not, perhaps this is something you'd like to do when you commence your new routine in the transition back into the work environment. Make sure you start any changes you'd like to implement from the very first day back as this will make it easier to establish and stick to your new routine.

- ◆ **Contact with friends and loved ones** – despite not being able to see friends and family members face to face during this time, many people report having had more contact via phone and other social media channels. Have you enjoyed this and is it something you would like to continue? Think about ways in which you can keep up this contact in your new normal. This may also include quality time with your partner or children. What has your quality time looked like since COVID-19, is there anything that you implemented into your daily life that you would like to continue i.e. date night, family night, games night etc?
- ◆ **Other considerations** – what else have you enjoyed about this situation? Have you enjoyed cooking more? Have you been able to spend less money? Have you developed a new hobby or passion that you would like to continue? Consider the positives of the situation and decide if you would like to continue any of these in your new routine moving forward.

Transition back to work

If you've been working from home, how has this been for you? You may have enjoyed this situation or perhaps you can't wait to get back into the work environment. Consider how you are feeling about returning to work. You may have positive emotions such as excitement or relief or perhaps you are starting to feel a little anxious.

If this is the case, take some time to think about the reasons for this. Is it linked to the commute to work? Is it more about being back in the office surrounded by people? Is it related to seeing particular colleagues or managers? Is it linked to your work/life balance? Is it leaving your family members at home?

If you are feeling anxious, it is important to seek help for this. Firstly, speak to your manager to explain how you are feeling and brainstorm possible solutions. Depending on your role and the organisation, it may be possible for you to work from home for longer or have more days working from home in the future. Establish this as soon as possible with your manager so that you can understand if this flexibility is possible.

There are some other things that could help you have a smooth transition back into the workplace:

- ◆ Ask your manager if it is possible to have a phased return to work – having a split between working from home and working from the office
- ◆ Consider your commute options, how best to get into work, your working hours
- ◆ If you have a friend at work, you might like to arrange a coffee for your first morning back
- ◆ Think about your working day and how you would like this to be. If you have scope to manage your own diary, consider your work/life balance, when you put meetings in the diary, allow time for lunch, consider your start and finish times too
- ◆ Keep up regular communication with your team. If you had weekly online meetings with your team, consider how you could continue these in person if you enjoyed this contact with your colleagues
- ◆ Ask for help – this next phase may take some time and we are here to help you navigate this time in the best way possible