

Transitioning Back to Work Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

The weeks and months after coronavirus hit, have been a rollercoaster of emotions. And now, another change is coming - potentially time to return to work. For some, going back to work will be an easy transition. For others, it might be more difficult. Either way, it is important to acknowledge what you are feeling and explore tools to help alleviate stress and anxiety amidst this transition.

You may be asking, what will this transition look like for me? Is it safe to return to work? What if I don't have childcare? Questions like this can leave us feeling lost, confused, overwhelmed, and exhausted. Now is a good time to look at ways to navigate this "new normal", as we brave stepping outside of the security of our homes to return to work.

Focus on what you can control

Amidst the transition back to work you may feel out of control, which can bring on anxiety and panic. Instead of focusing on what you can't control, focus on and put your energy towards the things you can control. For example, you cannot control others' consistent use of hand sanitizer, but you can control your own. So, make sure you have your sanitizer with you and use it as you feel is necessary. Control what you can.

Practice breathing

When we are hit with a stressful situation, our breathing is usually the first thing impacted. Practicing breathing can help improve such autonomic responses during stressful situations. To make a new habit, it is helpful to attach it to something you already do - perhaps brushing your teeth! After every time you brush your teeth, spend 1 minute focusing on your breath. Breathe in for 6 seconds and breathe out for 6 seconds. Repeat and adjust to what feels right.

Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings

Your thoughts and feelings - whatever they may be - are valid. Recognizing this can be a powerful tool. It is also helpful to recognize where in your body you might be harboring a specific thought or feeling. Use that recognition as a signal to practice mindfulness and come back to your body and the present moment.

Understanding your values and what you

Having a strong grasp of what you stand for can be helpful as you transition back into the workplace. What are your values? What kind of person do you want to be? What do you stand for? Understanding and committing to your values may help you navigate uncomfortable feelings, emotions, or situations you may find yourself in during this transition.

Practice grounding techniques

Feeling anxious or having a tough time being in the present moment? Practice a grounding technique, wherever you are. Perhaps it's a sensory grounding technique. What are you tasting, what are you hearing, what are you smelling, what are feeling (with touch), what are you seeing? Once you are able to come to the present moment, you will be better able to engage in what you are doing and shift your focus to that.

Be kind to yourself

Self-compassion is important for your overall well-being. Ask yourself - am I treating myself the way I would a loved one? Practicing a loving-kindness meditation a few times a week can be useful to bring love and kindness to yourself and those around you. Self-compassion allows us to spread compassion to those around us, which will inevitably be an important part of navigating.