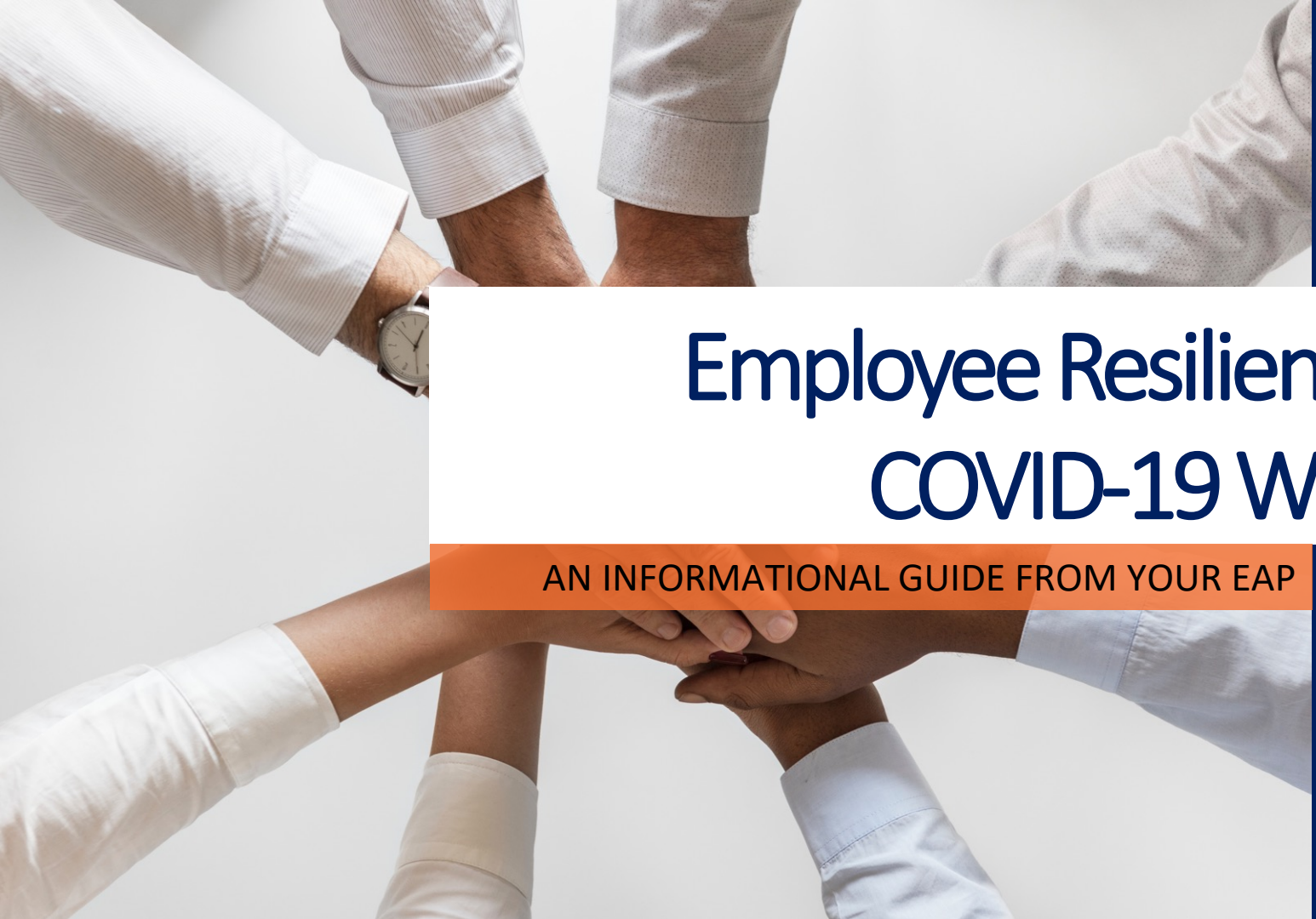


# Employee Resiliency in the COVID-19 Workplace

AN INFORMATIONAL GUIDE FROM YOUR EAP

DEER OAKS EAP SERVICES

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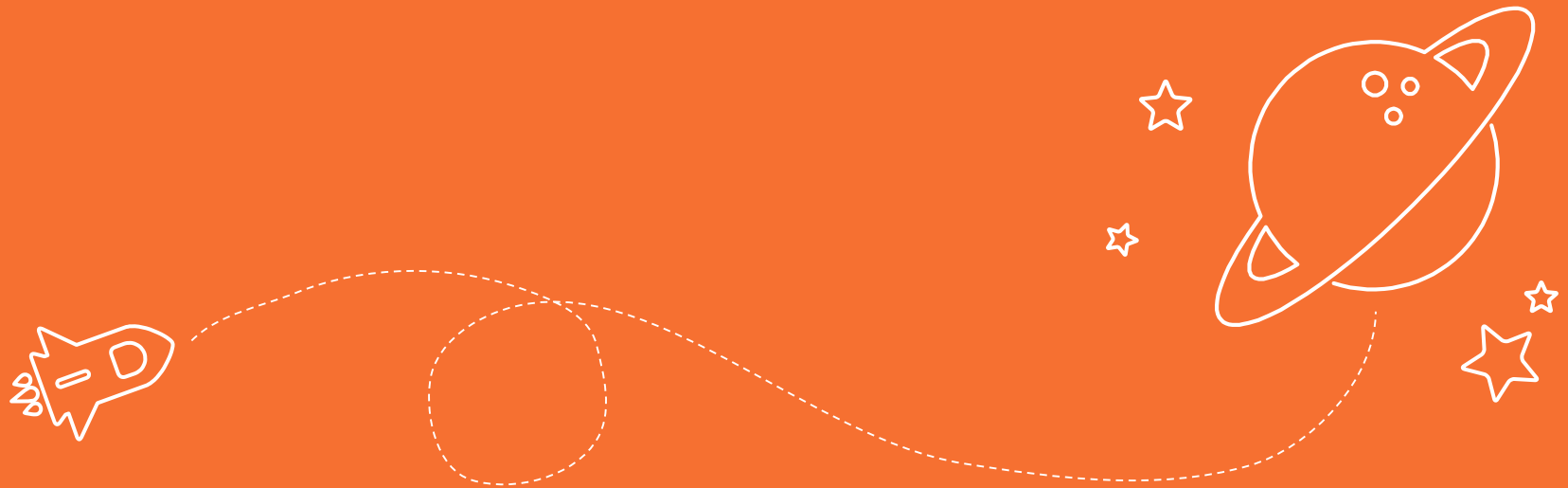



# INTRODUCTION

We understand that many of you are facing new challenges in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This informational guide provides helpful tips on how to handle stress, deal with change, and remain resilient in difficult times.

Your EAP is here to support you 24/7/365. If you find yourself struggling to cope with stress, anxiety, and other issues, give us a call. Our services are free and confidential.





# RESILIENCY

# Maintaining Composure During COVID-19

While government leaders and health officials around the world are encouraging people to remain calm, many are finding it difficult to do so given the strong measures being taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 worldwide.

It's not unusual to feel heightened anxiety and a sense of uncertainty given the scale of the outbreak and media coverage. The body's natural response to potential harm is to release large quantities of cortisol, epinephrine, and norepinephrine. These "stress hormones" aid in alertness, muscle preparedness, and energy to help the body protect itself.

While it's natural to feel anxious, operating in "fight or flight" mode for an extended period of time can result in high blood pressure, difficulty sleeping, digestion issues, and poor decision-making. Therefore, it's important that individuals actively manage their stress levels in order to protect both their physical and emotional health. Not only will this help facilitate rational thinking, but it can also help optimize the body's immune system.

Below are several ways to manage emotional health during uncertainty:

- Consider the impact of the current newsfeed, and limit exposure if needed.
- Get regular news updates from trusted official sources. Turn off instant notifications.
- Keep to a consistent routine.
- Participate in exercise and/or stretching.
- Practice relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, meditation, yoga, and mindfulness.
- Recognize when you are catastrophizing (jumping to unreasonable conclusions), and redirect your thoughts to what you know to be true.
- Ground your thoughts into the present by focusing on what you can see, hear, smell, and tactically feel.
- Some people turn to drugs, smoking, and alcohol to manage their stress. However, these are all unhealthy methods that can diminish the body's immune system.

Individuals who feel like they need professional help managing their anxiety should consider accessing their employee wellbeing resources if available and/or contact their physician.

*Source: Workplace Options. (2020, March). Maintaining Composure during COVID-19. Raleigh, NC: Author.*

# Limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and wear a mask. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

*Source: U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Ready.gov. (Updated 2019, December 20). Pandemic. Retrieved January 23, 2020, from https://www.ready.gov*



# Dealing with Change

Often, it is the uncertainty of not knowing that causes the most stress during periods of change. If your life is going through a change, it is important to maintain an open perspective and clear communication channels to ensure you can get the best out of the situation.

Below are a few suggestions to help you manage change more effectively, and reduce the stressors that are often associated with change:

- Ensure you are fully informed at all times.
- Take responsibility.
- Prepare for the next steps.
- Do a self-evaluation. Ask what the impact of the change will be on you personally, on your family and friends, and your life as a whole.
- Manage personal stress. Seek resources such as your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), activities you enjoy, relaxation techniques, and so on.
- Discuss the changes with others whom you are close to and who are important to you.
- Be proactive.
- Consult the source of information regarding the change—do not rely on the grapevine!
- Look for the benefits in the new life ahead of you.
- Have a positive attitude—change can be good!
- Look at areas that can influence your personal situation.
- Be objective and aware of all the consequences.
- Have one-on-ones with your partner.
- Ensure your perception of the change is accurate.
- Know your own strengths, skills, and areas of expertise.
- Use all avenues.
- Ask! If you are unsure of any aspect and how it may affect you, find out more information.
- Consider counseling through the EAP service.
- Reflect on all the information before making a decision.
- Take time out to analyze the information.
- Consider all options.
- Don't just go with the status quo.
- Have perspective—life does carry on!

*Source: Workplace Options. (Reviewed 2019). Dealing with change. Raleigh, NC: Author.*

# Cope with Job Stress and Build COVID-19 Resilience

Whether you are going into work or working from home, the COVID-19 pandemic has probably changed the way you work. Fear and anxiety about this new disease and other strong emotions can be overwhelming, and workplace stress can lead to burnout.1 How you cope with these emotions and stress can affect your wellbeing, the wellbeing of the people you care about, your workplace, and your community. During this pandemic, it is critical that you recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and manage job stress, as well as know where to go if you need help.

**Recognize the symptoms of stress you may be experiencing.**

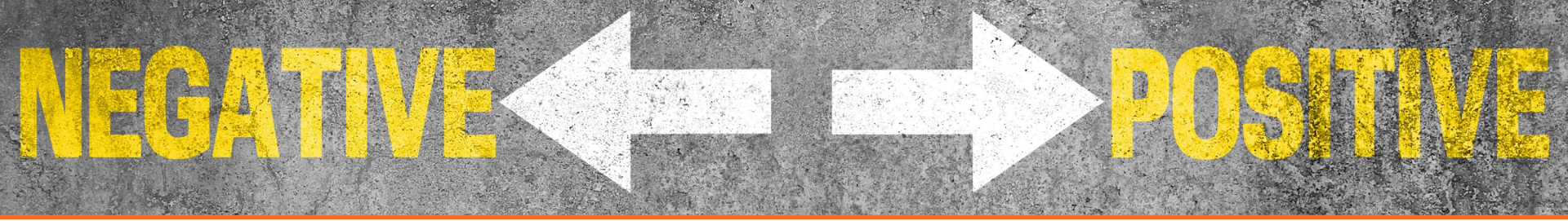
- Feeling irritation, anger, or in denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous, or anxious
- Lacking motivation
- Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having trouble concentrating

Know the common work-related factors that can add to stress during a pandemic. These can include:

- Concern about the risk of being exposed to the virus at work
- Taking care of personal and family needs while working
- Managing a different workload
- Lack of access to the tools and equipment needed to perform your job
- Feelings that you are not contributing enough to work or guilt about not being on the frontline
- Uncertainty about the future of your workplace or employment
- Learning new communication tools and dealing with technical difficulties
- Adapting to a different workspace and work schedule

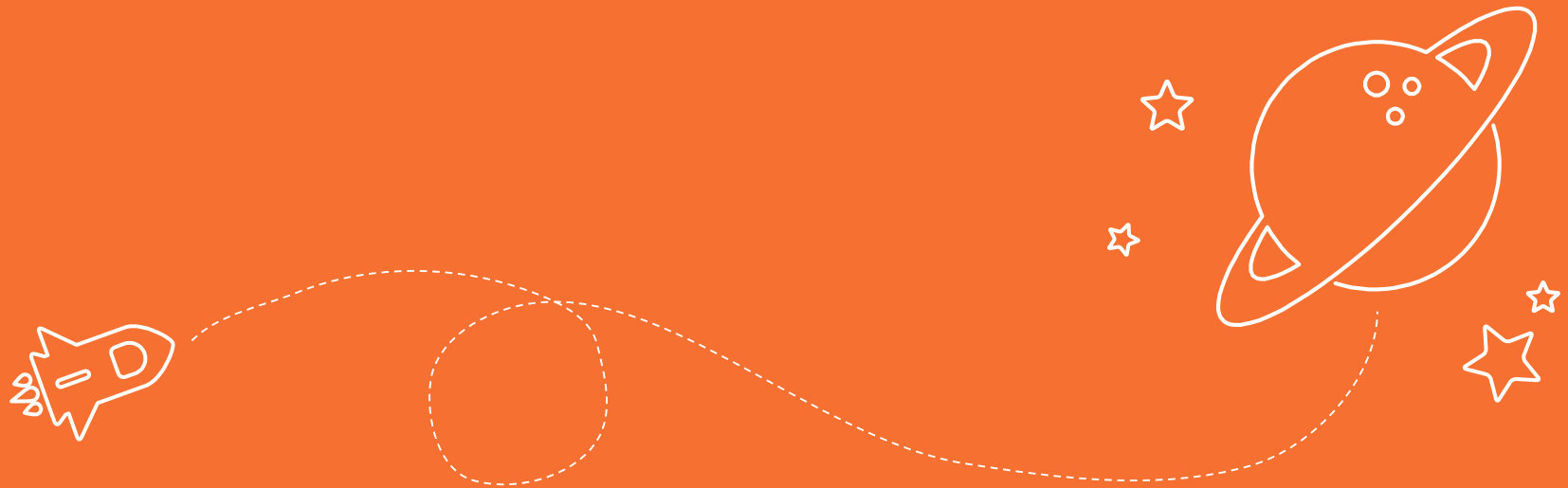
**Follow these tips to build resilience and manage job stress.**

- Communicate with your coworkers, supervisors, and employees about job stress while maintaining social distancing (at least six feet):
  - Identify things that cause stress, and work together to identify solutions.
  - Talk openly with employers, employees, and unions about how the pandemic is affecting work. Expectations should be communicated clearly by everyone.
  - Ask about how to access mental health resources in your workplace.
- Identify those things that you do not have control over, and do the best you can with the resources available to you.
- Increase your sense of control by developing a consistent daily routine when possible—ideally one that is similar to your schedule before the pandemic:




  - Keep a regular sleep schedule.
  - Take breaks from work to stretch, exercise, or check in with your supportive colleagues, family, and friends.
  - Spend time outdoors, either being physically active or relaxing.
  - If you work from home, set a regular time to end your work for the day, if possible.
  - Practice mindfulness techniques.
  - Do things you enjoy during nonwork hours.
- Know the facts about COVID-19. Be informed about how to protect yourself and others. Understanding the risk and sharing accurate information with people you care about can reduce stress and help you make a connection with others.
- Remind yourself that each person has a crucial role in fighting this pandemic.
- Remind yourself that everyone is in an unusual situation with limited resources.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and mentally exhausting.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns, how you are feeling, or how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting you:
  - Connect with others through phone calls, email, text messages, mailing letters or cards, video chat, and social media.
  - Check on others. Helping others improves your sense of control, belonging, and self-esteem. Look for safe ways to offer social support to others, especially if they are showing signs of stress, such as depression and anxiety.
- If you feel you may be misusing alcohol or other drugs (including prescription drugs) as a means of coping, reach out for help.
- If you are being treated for a mental health condition, continue with your treatment, and be aware of any new or worsening symptoms.

*Reference 1: World Health Organization (WHO). (2019, May 28). Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases. Retrieved January 25, 2021, from https://www.who.int*
*Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases (DVD). (Updated 2020, December 16). Employees: How to cope with job stress and build resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved January 25, 2021, from https://www.cdc.gov*



# STRESS MANAGEMENT

# Learn to Manage Stress

Everyone feels stress at one time or another. It's a normal and healthy reaction to change or a challenge. However, stress that goes on for more than a few weeks can affect your health. Keep stress from making you sick by learning healthy ways to manage it.



## Learn to recognize stress.

The first step in managing stress is recognizing it in your life. Everyone feels stress in a different way. You may get angry or irritable, lose sleep, or have headaches or stomach upset. What are your signs of stress? Once you know what signals to look for, you can start to manage it.

Also identify the situations that cause you stress. These are called *stressors*. Your stressors could be family, school, work, relationships, money, or health problems. Once you understand where your stress is coming from, you can come up with ways to deal with your stressors.

## Find healthy stress busters.

There are many healthy ways to manage stress. Try a few and see which ones work best for you:

- **Recognize the things you can't change.** Accepting that you can't change certain things allows you to let go and not get upset. For instance, you cannot change the fact that you have to drive during rush hour, but you can look for ways to relax during your commute, such as listening to a podcast or book.
- **Avoid stressful situations.** When you can, remove yourself from the source of stress. For example, if your family squabbles during the holidays, give yourself a breather, and go out for a walk or drive.
- **Get exercise.** Getting physical activity every day is one of the easiest and best ways to cope with stress. When you exercise, your brain releases chemicals that make you feel good. It can also help you release built-up energy or frustration. Find something you enjoy, whether it is walking, cycling, softball, swimming, or dancing, and do it for at least 30 minutes on most days.
- **Change your outlook.** Try to develop a more positive attitude toward challenges. You can do this by replacing negative thoughts with more positive ones. For example, rather than thinking, "Why does everything always go wrong?" change this thought to, "I can find a way to get through this." It may seem hard or silly at first, but with practice, you may find it helps turn your outlook around.
- **Do something you enjoy.** When stress has you down, do something you enjoy to help pick you up. It could be as simple as reading a good book, listening to music, watching a favorite movie, or having dinner with a friend. You can also take up a new hobby or class. Whatever you choose, try to do at least one thing a day that's just for you.

- **Learn new ways to relax.** Practicing relaxation techniques is a great way to handle daily stress. Relaxation techniques help slow your heart rate and lower your blood pressure. There are many types, from deep breathing and meditation to yoga and tai chi. Take a class, or try learning from books, videos, or online sources.
- **Connect with loved ones.** Do not let stress get in the way of being social. Spending time with family and friends can help you feel better and forget about your stress. Confiding in a friend may also help you work out your problems.
- **Get enough sleep.** Getting a good night's sleep can help you think more clearly and have more energy. This will make it easier to handle any problems that crop up. Aim for about seven to nine hours each night.
- **Maintain a healthy diet.** Eating healthy foods helps fuel your body and mind. Skip the high-sugar snack foods, and load up on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy, and lean proteins.
- **Learn to say *no*.** If your stress comes from taking on too much at home or work, learn to set limits. Ask others for help when you need it.

If you can't manage stress on your own, you may want to talk with your health care provider. Consider seeing a therapist or counselor through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) who can help you find other ways to deal with your stress. Depending on the cause of your stress, you also may find it helps to join a support group.

*Source: U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Library of Medicine (NLM), Medline Plus. (Updated 2021, July 2). Learn to manage stress. Retrieved August 6, 2021, from https://medlineplus.gov*

# Workplace Success: Enthusiasm and Attitude

A positive attitude is an "I can" attitude. It's important for you to learn how to develop a positive attitude and, almost as important, how to showcase that to others, including employers. Turn negative thinking into positive thinking, and display enthusiasm on the job.

**Never underestimate the power of PMA!**

*PMA*, or *Positive Mental Attitude*, is one's ability to maintain the belief that he or she can transform or change a tough situation into something better. This activity will help participants take difficult situations and find ways to empower themselves to turn negative thinking into positive thinking.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is a positive attitude? If I have a positive attitude, what actions might I display? What does a positive attitude "look" like to others?
- What is a negative attitude? If I have a negative attitude, what actions might I display? What does a negative attitude "look" like to others?

Then say: "Developing a positive attitude starts from learning to believe in one's self. In order to believe in ourselves, we must first understand our personal strengths." Consider and share your personal strengths.



## PMA Activity

Write the below statements on a piece of chart paper, and grab a set of dice. Sit with a friend or a trusted colleague, or a small group, and take turns rolling the dice two or three times. Complete the following statement upon each roll:

- Roll a 1: I am thankful for . . .
- Roll a 2: Other people compliment me on my ability to . . .
- Roll a 3: Something I would like other people to know about me is . . .
- Roll a 4: I feel really good about myself when . . .
- Roll a 5: I am proud of my ability to . . .
- Roll a 6: Something nice I recently did for someone else was . . .

***Note:*** *If the people in your group know each other well, feel free to substitute questions that ask about the positive qualities of the participants.*

Why do you think the statement for Roll #6 was included in this activity? It's because helping or "doing" for others often helps people feel good about themselves. When you feel good about yourself, you often demonstrate a positive attitude that can be seen by others.

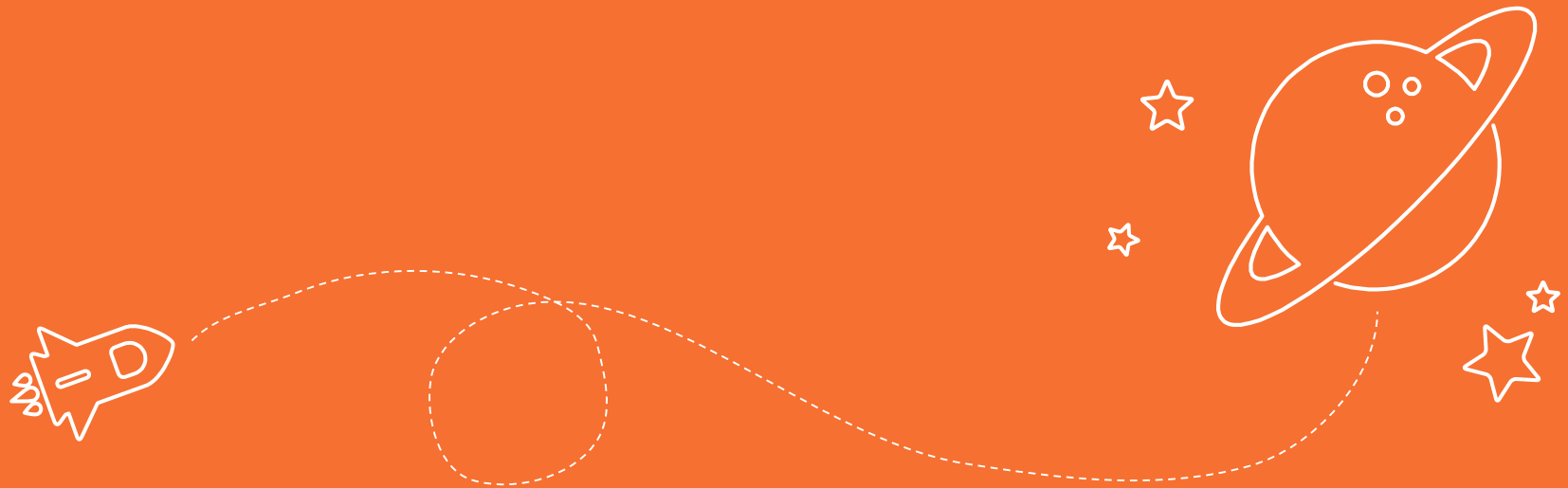
Discuss with participants how internal feelings have the ability to impact those around you. How might a positive attitude help you on a job?

## Journaling Activity

Do you think that attitude (whether positive or negative) is something people are born with or that they have power to control within themselves? Think about a time when your attitude (either positive or negative) impacted you and those around you. When is it most challenging for you to keep a positive mental attitude? What do you do to help keep yourself positive during difficult times?

Keep a log for one week. Write down 50 (or 40 or 30) great things that happen each day. The goal of this activity is to help you focus on the positive. Consider if you felt any different during the week as a result—either in your interactions with others or in your own feelings about yourself.

*Source: U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). (n.d.). Mastering soft skills for workplace success: Enthusiasm and attitude [Excerpt] (B. Schuette, Ed.). Retrieved October 18, 2018, from https://www.dol.gov/*



# RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE FOR EMPLOYEES



# COVID-19: Returning to the Workplace

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people work. Many workers have continued to go into their workplaces throughout the pandemic, adopting new health and safety measures. Others have found ways to work from home and may not have seen their coworkers or customers in person for many months. As the number of people who are vaccinated grows and the incidence of COVID-19 in the community drops, many workplaces that have been closed or operating with limited staff will reopen.

You may be excited or apprehensive about returning to your workplace—or likely a bit of both. That's natural and to be expected. Shifting to work from home was a big change, and returning to the workplace will be another. Here are some ideas that can help make this next adjustment a bit easier.

**Understand what will be expected of you.**

Familiarize yourself with your employer's plans, including any new procedures or schedule changes. Masks may be required. Barriers may be installed between workstations. There may be rules about gathering in groups for meetings or breaks. Schedules may be altered to keep the

number of people in the workplace down, with some people coming in and some people working from home on assigned days. Listen to and read directives carefully so you know what to expect and what will be expected of you.

**Know how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.**

Be sure to continue following the recommended measures to prevent spreading the virus, both at work and on your commute to and from work. Even people who are vaccinated can come down with—and spread—COVID-19, though the risk is greatly reduced. When at work, follow your employer's instructions on maintaining physical distance from coworkers and customers, wearing a mask, washing your hands often, and disinfecting surfaces that other people touch. Stay home when you are sick, even if you have only mild symptoms. Stay home, too, if a member of your household has symptoms of COVID-19. You can learn more about protecting yourself and others from COVID-19 on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/returning-to-work.html).

**Consider your risk.**

Are you or another member of your household at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19? (See information about this on the CDC website (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html). If so, you may need to take extra precautions. Check with your manager or your human resources (HR) representative to explore how your work might be adjusted to accommodate your increased risk. How might you work in a way that minimizes your contact with other people?

**Be clear with your manager about your caregiving responsibilities.**

If you have children at home who can't attend school or child care because of changes related to the pandemic, let your manager know. Explain your situation—that school is operating virtually or your child care is closed—and see if you can work out an arrangement that allows you to continue to work without putting your children at risk. The same is true if you are caring for an older or infirm family member and the care you used to rely on is no longer available.

**Ask questions if anything is unclear to you or feels unsafe.**

Don't be afraid to reach out to your manager or HR representative if you have questions or concerns about the transition to in-person work. Asking questions to understand the details of changing work arrangements can help you feel more confident that your employer has planned the transition carefully. If you have ideas for improving your employer's plans, suggest them to your manager. Becoming involved with the transition can make you feel more in control of the situation, and your ideas might help make work safer and more efficient for everyone.

**Be prepared.**

Take time to gather any work equipment that you need to bring back to the office. Make sure this is organized and ready to go the night before so

that you can grab it on your way out the door the next morning. Be sure to include things you might need to protect yourself, such as masks and hand sanitizer. Since you may be combining work in the office and work at home for a while, organizing a work bag for yourself could keep you from forgetting something important. Plan, too, for how you will get to work safely, and any special arrangements you may need to make for your children or other family members.

**Allow yourself extra time.**

The schedule you followed before the pandemic may be too tight now. Allow extra time for your commute if public transportation is operating at reduced capacity. Factor in time for any new drop-off procedures at your child care provider. You might need extra time if symptom screening is conducted at the entrance to your workplace or if elevators are operating at reduced capacity. You'll also want some extra time to settle back into your workspace.

**Be patient with yourself and others as you adjust to a changed work environment.**

When you return to the workplace it probably won't feel like "getting back to normal." With masks, physical distancing, and restrictions on gathering in groups, your workplace may feel different and possibly a little uncomfortable. After months of pandemic isolation and wariness, you may have changed, too. You may become anxious when others come close to you, or tire more easily from social interactions. Even if you have no hesitancy about jumping back into the social engagement of in-person work life, some of your coworkers may. Be patient with yourself and others as you adjust to the new work environment.

**Find healthy ways to deal with stress and anxiety.**

If you find yourself becoming tense and anxious, either in anticipation of your return to the workplace or while you are there, practice a stress-management technique that works for you. You might try the following:

- **Deep breathing**—Slowly breathe in through your nose to fill your lungs, then slowly exhale through your mouth. Concentrate on your breathing, rather than your worries, and feel yourself relax.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation**—Relax each muscle group one by one, moving from your toes to your head. You might massage the muscles that get particularly tight when you are tense, which might be in your jaw, neck, or shoulders.
- **Meditation**—While sitting comfortably, focus your mind on just one thing. That might be your breathing, a calming word you repeat to yourself, or an object directly in front of you. With practice, you'll learn to shut out distractions so that meditation leaves you calm and refreshed.
- **Mindfulness**—Focus your mind on the present moment—what is happening right now, the sounds and smells around you, how your body feels—and accept it as it is. By concentrating on the here and now, rather than what has happened, what might happen, or what you think should happen, you'll find yourself growing calmer and more relaxed.

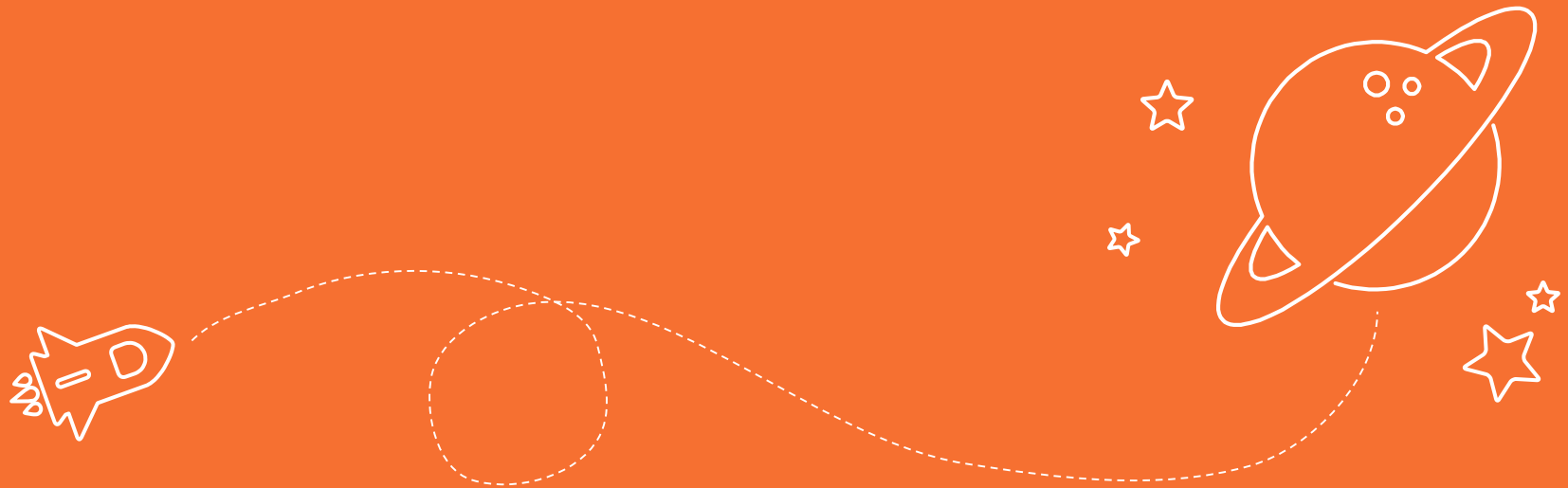
There are many other ways to relax, too, including a walk outside (especially in nature), listening to soothing music, and yoga. Healthy eating, sleep, and exercise habits also play a role in managing stress. Pay attention to your body and your emotions. When you feel the signs of tension, take a few minutes to pause and calm yourself.

**Don't be ashamed to ask for help.**

Even in the best of times, people can find themselves with worries that seem too difficult to manage. And these are extraordinary times, in which many people are facing unprecedented worries and stress. If you are anxious about the transition back to in-person work, don't be ashamed to ask for help. Your employee wellbeing program is available to help you process difficult emotions, manage stress, and navigate change. The program can provide expert help in a telephone consultation, refer you to a counselor for additional support (by video if you choose), and help you find child care or elder care resources.

*Source: Morgan, H. (2021, April 19). COVID-19: Returning to the workplace (C. Gregg-Meeker & B. Schuette, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.*





# RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE FOR MANAGERS

# Managing Through COVID-19: Communicate to Build Trust

No matter how good a job your organization's leaders are doing at communicating with employees through the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, your people also need to hear from you and feel that you are hearing them. When organization-wide announcements are made of changes that affect employees' work, you need to follow those quickly with communications of your own and with calls or meetings at which your team can ask you questions. Your people will want to know what the changes mean for each of them.

Too little communication leaves an information vacuum that people tend to fill with speculation, rumor, and fear. This is a time for extra communication: more frequent, with more detail, and with more opportunities for questions and discussion.

How you handle that communication will be key to whether your people feel comfortable in following the plan and whether they are motivated to give their best work. A big part of their reaction—and how they behave moving forward—will be based on their level of trust in the organization and in you.

How can you build that trust as a manager? By communicating clearly, honestly, and often, and by taking the time to listen to your employees' concerns. If your team members believe that you and the organization care about them as people, that you understand their work and personal needs, they are more likely to follow and give their full energy, focus, and creativity to their work. If, on the other hand, they feel that their needs—especially their health needs and their families' health needs during the pandemic—aren't understood or respected, they may withdraw into feelings of resentment, follow directives only reluctantly, or even consider finding other work.

Here are some ways to communicate and listen to build trust and engagement:

- **Communicate often.** In times of rapid change and disruption, your team needs to hear from you often. Share relevant email and posted updates from the organization as they come to you. Your team may also need more frequent opportunities to discuss issues and plans together.
- **Stay connected with your team.** Consider a schedule that includes regular check-ins for individuals and the team, including those working remotely and those who are in the workplace. Use the check-ins both to communicate casually (one human being to another) and to maintain focus on work objectives. Consider building extra time in



meetings for social interactions if the team is no longer together in person. You might even schedule a weekly time just for catching up with each other, with a rule that work discussion is off limits on these calls or video conferences.

- **Ask, don't assume.** Ask about the best times for check-ins and meetings; don't assume what works for you will work for each of your employees. Those with children at home may have new schedule constraints, for example. Ask how employees are doing; don't assume everything is fine. Ask how the technology you are using for meetings is working. Ask whether people understand new directives and priorities. When you ask, pause to give people time to think and respond, then listen carefully to what they say.

- **Frame your communication with positive messages.** Even when delivering tough news, share the facts, then shine a light on the positive and hopeful aspects of the situation:
  - Choose words that inspire confidence and don't amplify fears—while maintaining honesty and openness.
  - Keep yourself and your team focused on the present—the reality of the situation as you know it today, and what you and your team can do to make things better. Model the idea that "today we can do better."
  - Remind your team to focus on what they control. It's draining and unproductive for people to worry about what they can't control.
  - Encourage a problem-solving approach on your team. Ask for ideas on different ways to get the work done. Explore cross-training opportunities to build more flexibility as to who is able to do needed work at home and in the workplace.
  - Demonstrate a calm, thoughtful, open-minded, problem-solving approach yourself.
  - Discuss with your team what you are all learning from the changes you are going through: which new work practices are effective and might be built on for further improvement; what you are learning about each other.
  - Share successes and review accomplishments with your team to keep spirits up.

Anticipate questions employees will ask, and be prepared with answers. If changes are being made to where, when, and how employees are to do their work, your team members are likely to have questions about

- Safety protocols
- What training is available on safety protocols and new work practices
- What steps will be taken if an employee tests positive for COVID-19
- How decisions are being made about who comes into the workplace and when
- What to expect when coming back to the workplace for the first time after a period of not working or working from home
- Whether attendance in the workplace is a request or a requirement, and the consequences of choosing not to come in
- Whether vaccination is encouraged or required for attendance in the workplace, and the consequences of choosing not to be vaccinated
- How specific needs will be considered, such as lack of child care or high health risk

Demonstrate your strong and caring leadership by being ready with answers to easily anticipated questions like these. Study your organization's directives, ask questions of your manager and human resources (HR) representative to be clear on where you have leeway to make decisions and be flexible, and be clear in your own mind about how you will apply new work rules and guidelines fairly and with the safety of your people—and their families—as a driving priority.

**Be compassionate, honest, and open.**

- Show your compassion by being genuine in your communication and by demonstrating that you care about your employees' wellbeing.
- Listen more than you talk so that employees know that they are heard and so that you learn what they are experiencing and thinking. As a sign of active listening, summarize what you are hearing from employees during your discussion and ask for confirmation that you have understood. Ask open-ended questions to get people talking, and make an effort to draw out team members who are holding back.
- Share what you know, even if it's only partial information. In a rapidly changing situation like a pandemic, even experts don't have all the answers yet. Your organization's leaders and you will need to make decisions based on the information you have. The more information your team has, the more confident they will feel in moving forward.
- Be clear about your expectations. Goals and work practices may have changed dramatically. Make sure employees understand what you want from them and how you expect them to work together.
- Avoid jargon. Employees have an extra need now for meaningful communication and will not respond well to catch phrases that don't address their concerns.

- Don't be afraid to admit you don't know the answer to a question. When that happens, say that you don't know, and commit to following up. In some cases, that might be by finding the answer from someone else in your organization. In other cases, it might be by finding out where the employee can get the answer.
- Build a culture of trust on your team by making it a safe place to express emotions and process reactions to changes and new information together.

**Model emotional maturity.**

Employees look to their manager as a role model for how to react to changes at work or in crisis situations. If you appear anxious, they will feel and echo that anxiety. The most effective approach is to acknowledge when a situation is difficult and may cause stress, but show confidence that it can be handled and overcome. This mature attitude from a leader can help employees meet challenges successfully.

*Source: Morgan, H. (Revised 2021, April). Step 3: Communicate to build trust. In Leading teams in a COVID-19 world: A guide for managers (pp. 6–9). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.*

# Online OnDemand Seminars

For further support, check out the following OnDemand seminars available on the Deer Oaks Member Website at www.deeroakseap.com.

- A Resilient Return to the Workplace
- Addressing Anxiety
- Building Better Mental Health
- Building Resilience Muscles
- Coronavirus: Minimizing the Impact & Building Psychological Immunity
- COVID-19 Support—Creating a Positive Learning and Working Environment
- Keep Calm and Carry On: Maintaining Your Composure Amidst the Pandemic Panic
- Leading Your People Back to Work
- Reframing Your World
- Vlog: Millennial Life During the Pandemic



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