



COVID-19 & Re-Entry into the Workplace

**“The only way to make sense out of change is to
plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance”**

- Alan W. Watts



The Defining Moment Foundation

How COVID-19 Could Affect the Future of Work

The **COVID-19** pandemic has forced many businesses to adapt to a new way of **working almost overnight**. More businesses are operating remotely, on different schedules, and with changes in staffing for the first time. Since many of the adjustments employers are making are in line with existing workplace trends, **it's reasonable to expect COVID-19 could permanently transform the way we work.**



More Remote Work



Research has shown that 62 percent of employed adults in the U.S. have been working from home during the pandemic. While this is a dramatic shift in the way many employers do businesses, an increase in remote work is in line with existing workplace trends. **Businesses may find that they can save on office space costs by letting employees work remotely.**

Having the flexibility to work from home is a great option for all workers and could be especially helpful in making workplaces more inclusive for workers with disabilities. In a recent 2020 workplace study, research showed that while 70 percent of workers with disabilities want to telecommute, only 18 percent had the option before the pandemic. **Making remote work a permanent provision for employees could dramatically increase the number of jobs open to disabled workers.**

Better Work-Life Balance

With so many parents juggling their own workload, and with full-time parenting of children who would normally be in school or childcare, Work-Life Balance is more important than ever. Employers who can let parents work from home, work on flexible schedules, or otherwise find the right balance between caregiving and work may now see the value in offering more flexibility to employees going forward. This could be especially helpful for parents who struggle to pay for childcare or who have limited childcare options, and for caregivers who look after ill or disabled family members with little outside support.



Expanded Access to Paid Sick Leave



Employers are now more aware than ever of the dangers of employees coming to work ill, as well as the economic toll for employees who don't have paid sick days. That's why the **Families First Coronavirus Response Act** included expanded access to paid leave for employees of companies with fewer than 500 employees, including paid family leave for those who need to care for a sick relative.

Paid leave was already a pressing topic before the pandemic, and some states have recently expanded their paid leave provisions. **Offering paid leave has the potential to improve workplace safety, and is especially helpful for caregivers who may need to take leave to care for a family member even when current public health conditions subside.**

Employment and Caregiving



Research shows that caregiving responsibilities have a profound impact on the employment opportunities and financial well-being of single parents, parents of children with special needs, and caregivers of elderly parents. Single working parents have a lower household income overall, and only 50 percent of single working mothers are employed full time. Single parents are less likely to have health insurance, life insurance, or a retirement plan, and often score lower on overall well-being. Caregivers deal with similar stresses. Families of children with special needs are more likely to live paycheck-to-paycheck, change jobs frequently, and experience job-related stress

If employers made current accommodations permanent for the employees who need them most, these gaps could begin to close.

Mental Health as a Workplace Priority



Prior to the pandemic, mental health was a growing problem in the workplace. Research shows that one in every four adults are dealing with mental health or substance abuse issues, and the same number wish their employer made mental health counseling and substance abuse a benefit to employees. At the same time, two in five employers also considered these benefits important, but most had been unable to provide access to their employees. Now that the majority of the workforce is facing additional stress at once, employers may be more concerned than ever with supporting their employees' mental health.

Mental Health & The Workplace



Depression

Since depression was the leading cause of disability claims in the U.S. before the pandemic, supporting employee mental health will likely continue to be a priority even after the additional stress of the pandemic wanes. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) can be essential resources for workers who are struggling, but these benefits are often underused because employees aren't aware of what help is available to them. If employers offering these benefits promote these resources to their employees during these difficult times, they may see a demand for benefits to increase.

Employers and employees alike are undergoing a difficult period of stress, grief, and rapid change. Employers can use what we learn from this experience to create more inclusive, empathetic, and supportive workplaces for all employees, and to be better prepared to weather any future disruptions to the way we work.

Working Parents are Hitting a Wall. Employers Don't Want to Lose Them



Unsustainable. That sums up the fevered pace at which many working parents have been hustling since the pandemic started. They're up and working at all hours to meet the demands of their jobs while also assuming full-time roles as caretaker and tutor in the absence of child care and school. For those whose aging parents require help, their days are even more fraught, and they're doing all of it against the backdrop of a deadly virus. **But it's one they'll have a hard time maintaining come fall if there still aren't full-time school or child care options.**

Some companies are trying to make accommodations based on the age of their employees' children, since the demands on parents' time and energy differ depending on whether they have infants and toddlers, grade school kids or teenagers.

Scared To Return To Work or Can't With Kids at Home? Here's What You Need To Know



1. Talk to your Employer

And say, **“You know what, I don’t feel comfortable coming back right now. But maybe, in two weeks I might feel comfortable,”** **“Can I wait?”** You might say you want to wait, talk to co-workers and hear how the safety measures are going as things get rolling again. Your employer might not be able to hire everybody back right away, and might agree not to call you back to work yet.

Check with your State unemployment office for the latest information.

Underlying Medical Conditions

2. There are special rules if you have an underlying medical condition.

A big concern is that most workers don't understand their rights, If you have diabetes, heart disease or an immune deficiency and your doctor advises against going to work during the pandemic, Congress voted to let people in that situation collect unemployment.

If you have an underlying medical condition, first contact your employer and explain why you can't return to work. Then explain the situation to your State's Unemployment Office. A letter from a doctor should be helpful.



Child Care



3. If you can't get child care, you should be able to stay on unemployment.

Many parents are stuck right now if they have a job that can't be done remotely from home. They can't return to their place of work because schools and day cares are closed, and they don't have anyone to watch their kids. Congress approved help for them, too.

In addition to unemployment benefits, some parents may be eligible for 12 weeks of paid leave mandated by Congress, though that will depend in part on the size of the business. Companies that provide this leave can then hold on to tax money they would have otherwise sent to the IRS and use it to cover the cost of paid leave for parents.



4. Just being afraid is not enough to stay on unemployment.

Getting back to the safety issue, just feeling unsafe is not enough to stay on unemployment.

5. What if your workplace seems particularly unsafe?

If your workplace is not taking basic safety precautions, and you can document it, you might qualify to refuse to go back to that job and stay on unemployment. **The argument you'd be making is that the workplace is not meeting the prevailing conditions of work for the area.**

5 Ways to Support your Employee's Mental Health During a Pandemic

Right now, employees are currently experiencing more fear and anxiety than usual. The uncertainty about the state of their health, jobs and the future are causing employees to feel heightened levels of stress.

1. Utilize technology to offer mental health resources:

Technology is a great enabler. Employees are turning to collaboration tools and video conferences to discuss work and maintain relationships with co-workers while working from home, which can have a positive effect on employee well-being.

20% of working-age adults report having a mental illness, yet many are unsure if their company offers comprehensive mental health resources. With employees working remotely, now is the time to use technology to provide access to a variety of mental health programs, such as meditation platforms and virtual education for employees to learn coping mechanisms and stress management.

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2. Use this opportunity to reduce the stigma:

Often the fear of stigma prevents some employees from getting the help they need. It's not necessarily an easy topic to discuss, but starting the conversation can lessen the stigma while providing education. Use your employee wellness program to educate and provide resources for self-help and self-care. Bringing in a virtual therapist to discuss ways of recognizing symptoms, improving mental health, and seeking outside help can also be helpful.

We need to continually reinforce the importance of taking care of your mental well-being as you do with your physical well-being. We can't continue to separate the mind from the body, they are one.

3. Double-down on communication:

Communicating clearly with your workforce about the mental health and well-being resources available to them and showing empathy in a time of crisis can go a long way, not just for the overall well-being of your employees but for the company's health long-term.

Managers and HR should also communicate consistently about mental health resources offered and covered in employees' benefits plans, such as counselors they can call, meditation and stress management services and access to employee assistance programs.

The challenges employees are currently facing won't be instantly resolved when the crisis eventually ends, which is why it's important to continue communicating about mental well-being even after things return to the **“new normal.”**

4. Prioritize well-being in your benefits plan:

Companies should prioritize their employees' entire well-being, including physical, mental and financial health, all year round – not just during a crisis. Companies should have these resources built into their benefits plan to show they care about their workforce beyond this period in time. Increased levels of stress lead to more doctor's visits, which means increased healthcare costs to the employer. **By making the overall well-being of your workforce a top priority, company leaders can ensure they emerge as a healthier and more united organization after experiencing this pandemic.**

Educating employees on the mental well-being resources available to them doesn't just apply in times of crisis or during open enrollment. Proactively preparing your workforce for future mental health-related issues can prevent employees from feeling the fear of the unknown.

5. Show empathy and leadership:

Employees are feeling a sense of uncertainty and heightened stress right now, about their health, job and financial security. Leaders who show they care about individual employees and provide mental health guidance right now can help boost spirits.

Managers should take extra steps during this time:

- Check in with their team on a daily basis about things other than work.
- Host video calls to keep up employee morale.
- Promote a larger conversation about overall well-being.
- Remind employees to take mental and physical breaks, exercise and participate in other non-work-related activities to reduce anxiety and improve productivity.

Rumi's Poem The Guest House

How a 13th century Iranian poet reminds us of an unexpected truth.

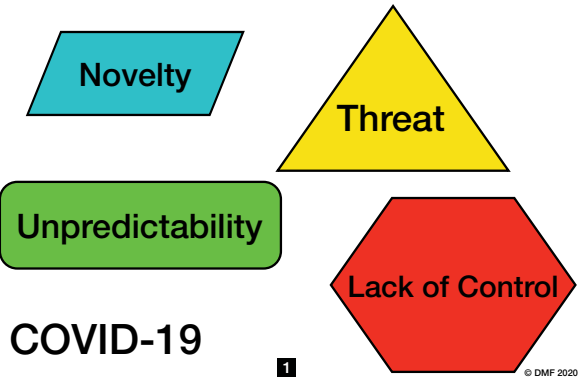
The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.
Be grateful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

— Jellaludin Rumi



Factors that make the Coronavirus seem more difficult for us



A Kids Resource Book

Help Our Children Right Now!
COVID-19 Positive Coping Strategies

The Defining Moment Foundation

The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

Strengthening your Resiliency in the time of COVID-19

The ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity.

The Defining Moment Foundation

DMF 2020

Staying Connected:

How to prevent loneliness during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Defining Moment Foundation

Long-Distance Caregiving during COVID-19.

The Defining Moment Foundation

Healthy Relationships and COVID-19

COVID-19

The Defining Moment Foundation

COVID-19 Mindfulness and Stress Reduction

Watch the effects of your thoughts as they ripple into your awareness.

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Re-Entry

Every Single Person Can Benefit From Self-Examination.

COVID-19 has touched our humanity.

**We continue to look forward to a brighter future
for this generation, and future generations.**



NJ COVID-19 Information Hub
<https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/reopen>

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**PROUD TO BE
STIGMA-FREE**

From our foundation to you and your family

In these times of **COVID-19**
no matter the challenge,
you don't have to face it alone,
we are all in this together.

"Dr. B"

For downloadable slides of these workshops, kindly email:

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