

Preparing to Return to Work as Lockdown Lifts

5th August 2021

As lockdown lifts and gradually some of us return to workspaces, the transition back may be difficult. If you're returning to the workplace after a long absence due to COVID-19, we recommend the following:

Find out what to expect of your workspace when you return. Ask your manager what to expect upon your return. Think of practical barriers such as computer passwords that might have expired, or door or parking codes that are no longer valid. If the law still requires you to maintain physical distancing at your workplace, will your physical space or schedule change to reflect this? If there is a building or office manager, they might have an update for you before the return to the office.

Finalise your arrangements for personal and family needs. Going back to the workplace could mean that the routine and systems that you and your family have become used to during the pandemic may change. If you're expected to return to the workplace but have children whose schools are still closed, who will look after them? If you are caring for an older relative, who will look after them? If someone is at high risk of exposure to COVID-19, do they have a routine for coming home at the end of the day that minimises the chance they will infect others, such as washing their hands immediately? Having these conversations ahead of time will help make sure that expectations for you, and those in your household are clear.

Plan your return with your manager. It's always a good idea to check in with your manager on what priorities are, even if you've been doing this while working from home. Are there projects that you pressed "pause" on at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic that will "unpause" when you're back? If you're a manager, don't forget that you should be having these conversations with your team, so that they're aware of what the priorities and expectations are upon return. You could look at your calendar and schedule check-in meetings with the people you manage, and who manage you, soon after you return to the workplace.

Be kind to yourself and others. Remember that, just as it was an adjustment for you not to go to the workplace, it might be an adjustment to return to the workplace. You could be operating under new management, with new health and safety guidelines in place. Remember that it's OK if you're slow to start at your job, as long as you're doing so safely.

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Be aware of those around you who could also be struggling. Before long, you'll all settle into a routine that will feel natural.

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