



Transitioning back to the Workplace Emotional Considerations for the HR Professional

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OBJECTIVES:

- Understanding the stressful impact of this disruptive event on the human condition and the impact on the workplace.
- Understanding the emotional pyramid of 7 needs for fostering resilience of returning employees.
- Exploring and increasing an understanding of reactions, including both anticipatory and collective, within ourselves as HR professionals, as well as, within our returning employees.
- Learning what to practice while assisting employees with re-acclimating to their work sites, along with positive coping techniques to model and encourage.
- Emphasizing the leadership role of HR during the transitioning process, to including the 4 C's of necessary communication for employee engagement.
- Resources

Welcome to 2020

“If You Don't Already Suffer From An
Anxiety Disorder,
You Will Be Assigned One”

WHAT ABOUT THOSE BIZARRE ...

Out of Control or
Powerlessness

Rather than interpret –
focus on the feeling
associated with the
dream



ALL JOKING ASIDE COVID 19 FATIGUE AND TRAUMA ARE REAL

- Anxiety, depression and other mental health issues increasing
- Exponential increase in calls to suicide hotlines
- EAP Survey of those working at home 35% reported experiencing mental health concerns
- Substance use and abuse increased (recent national survey 32% reported drinking while on the job at home)

ALL JOKING ASIDE COVID 19 FATIGUE AND TRAUMA ARE REAL

- Overdoses up from Jan to April 16.6% compared to same time 2019
- Domestic Violence reports have increased Drug Control Policy's
- CPS and APS reports up
- Prediction divorce rates will increase

KEEP IN MIND THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA

Parts of our brain have shut down in order to survive

- As a result we are not able to fully process all of what is going on
- Feeling somewhat numb and out of touch with our emotions is normal, especially if you have past experiences of trauma
- Source: Jennifer Yanger, LPC – Trauma Specialist

KEEP IN MIND THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA

- We deal with it differently some more apt for hypervigilance/ anxiety while others may be depressed/ hypoactive
- In-depth processing of trauma may happen years later
- When in the midst of trauma just getting by emotionally and functioning at a different pace can be normal
- Source: Jennifer Yanger, LPC – Trauma Specialist

Our “New Now Normal”



What is wrong with this picture?

WHAT THE HECK IS A DISRUPTIVE EVENT?"

BY GAYE LEVY OF BACKDOOR SURVIVAL

"I use this term to describe any event that could potentially transform our personal lives into one of chaos, distress, confusion, or all of the above."



The Ripple Effect

...and the
extensive
impact

WHOLE PERSON CONCEPT





When Is Fear Headed Off The Rails?

It is natural to be fearful –it is part of the survival instinct.

3 factors that contribute to increased fear:

Unpredictable
Uncontrollable
Sustained

When we feel out of control we want to gain control and there are various behaviors to attempt this:

Irrational fears or reactions
Micromanaging in other areas
Gathering info excessively

WHEN IS WORRY TOO MUCH?

- When we become preoccupied (“what if” excessively)
- Can’t function due to the ruminating (not sleeping, becoming immobilized, appetite disturbance)
- Watching news
- 24/7 Panic attacks
- If already experiencing or prone to anxiety, phobias or depression can exacerbate
- Need to realize if trying to help someone else you can’t talk people in or out of their feelings –need to listen, support and encourage

ANTICIPATORY & COLLECTIVE REACTIONS TO EXPECT

- Know that it is normal to have mixed feelings about returning to work – may be anxious, fearful or excited about it (at home experiences vary from home to home – “in the same storm but not the same boat”)
- Individually and collectively we are grieving many losses in both our personal and professional lives
- Children, even older children, may become more clingy, as well as our pets and may not want us to RTW! (need to prepare them)

ANTICIPATORY & COLLECTIVE REACTIONS TO EXPECT

- Concern over childcare, finances and other practical issues
- Having to tolerate the uncertainty
- May have concern for safety precautions at work



WHEN RETURNING REMEMBER

- For some may feel like the first day of school again
- Expect it to bother you or your employees
- May not like the new changes or precautions at work (safe distancing, work areas may be rearranged, wearing masks or wipe downs, carrying your laptop and other necessary work material back and forth).
- If have felt isolated at home may look forward to returning but may feel isolated there, as well, due to the physical distancing team rotation
- May grieve the former routines, set up and “old ways of doing things.”

PRACTICE:

Manage expectations – expect this to bother you and remind yourself “I am doing the best I can,” consider what you can and can’t control at this time and let go of perfectionism

Positive self talk- “ I can do this, small steps, this will get better, this too shall pass”

Support each other – despite safe distancing can still support one another, be patient and kind with each other (some may struggle more than others).

PRACTICE:

Identify and regulate emotions – may notice increase in resistance, ‘fire hosing’ or irritability in self or others

Communicate with one another – “if don’t talk it out will act it out”

Apologize – when appropriate respectfully and genuinely apologize

Embrace feedback – own your own behavior and listen to feedback from others (resist the temptation to get defensive)

PRACTICE

To off set the Fight or Flight Stress Response:

- Drink water! (forget with masks)
- Exercise regularly – 3 x times a week, 30 min if possible
- Eat healthy food that boots your immune system (fruits and bright veggies)
- Sleep – average of 7 hours a night (make bedroom conducive for sleep; if wake up write down, or type, concerns or get up for a while; limit what you watch or listen to prior to sleep)

EMOTIONAL PYRAMID OF NEEDS by Susan David, PhD

“Emotional Agility”



REACCLIMATING TO THE WORKPLACE

- Create new routines at work
- Boundaries have been blurred while working from home – reset boundaries in order to not burn out! (may be the most challenging)
- If see something of concern, say something constructively and not play the blame game
- Be kind and remind if someone forgets or doesn't follow new safety protocols or policies (thank them if you are the one needing reminder)

REACCLIMATING TO THE WORKPLACE

- Take and encourage breaks and getting fresh air when possible
- Practice gratitude individually or as a team
- Practice mindfulness – being in the moment
- Remember will experience up's and down's

4 C'S OF COMMUNICATION DURING CHANGE OR CRISIS

- Calmly – breathe and be present in the moment
- Clearly – share as much as you can when you can both verbally and in writing
- Consistently – be consistent with your message and throughout the organization
- Continually – regularly, employees need to hear more than once, can address the rumors, and ok to say that you don't know but will find out if possible



HOW TO SUPPORT

DON'T SAY

- "Stop worrying about it."
- "Don't let it bother you so much."
- "Calm down or snap out of it."
- "We've all been there"
- "I know exactly how you feel."
- "Maybe you should you think about happier things"

DO SAY

- "Thank you for letting me know how you are doing."
- "How may I help you, is there anything that you need or is there something I can do for you?"
- "I can't imagine what you are going through."
- Do follow up with the person later and remember we cannot talk anyone in our out of something!

EMPATHY

- Equals Engagement
- Needs to be authentic
(not sarcastic “you are lucky to have a job right now”)
- While we can't fix problems our connection can make it better

4 TRAITS OF EMPATHY

- Perspective taking
- Staying out of judgment
(this is very important)
- Recognizing emotion in others
- Communicating and responding

CONSIDER

- Stages of Life – staff are in different stages of life which will impact how they react to change
- Resistance – try and understand where it comes from, using sports metaphor of staying observant and ready to move in another direction
- Polarization – look for common goals or mutual purpose

CONSIDER

- Suggestion box or feedback mechanism for sharing concerns as you begin with the new adaptations
- Celebrate Adaptions or new Milestones
- Flexibility vs Rigidity to accommodate needs when possible

REMEMBER

- Uncertain Times = Change
- Leads to worry and anxiety
- Some may be “waiting for the other shoe to drop”
- Everyone grieving losses and change
- Human behavior to fill in the blanks for the unknown
- Tell ourselves stories – positive and negative
- Our stories can create rumors
- Employees will be vigilant and possibly hypervigilant
- Some may need more attention – even for the tasks previously competent in

REMEMBER TO:

- Be Aware
- Observe
- Respond
- Accountability



Relax, Breathe, BeCalm...

If you're reading this,
release your shoulders from
your ears, unclench your jaw, and
remove your tongue from the roof
of your mouth. We physically
tend to hold onto stress in
least noticeable ways.

Relax.

Devyn W.

tinybuddha.com

Put reminders
around your
work space

Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck,
Embrace Change and Thrive in Work
and Life

by Susan David, PhD

RESOURCES

National Institutes of Mental Health
website(nihm.nih.gov)

Neveralone.love

Deepak Chopra

(emotional support and other resources)

[The Power of Vulnerability \(audio
book\)](#)

by Brene' Brown or her website

brenebrown.com

RESOURCES

Podcasts –search topics of stress, anxiety or depression

Search your APP Store for “anxiety relief” –many apps for anxiety, depression and sleep disorders

Apps like “Headspace” and “Calm”
<https://blog.calm.com/take-a-deep-breath> or Ritual and Insight – free apps

Employee Assistance Program
(counseling, management consulting, debriefing, & training)



Questions,
Concerns or
Thoughts to Share?

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