



Back-to-Work with Success

A Be Inclusive Now Virtual Learning Session

Building Skills to Cope with Anxiety and a 'New Normal' in the Workplace

Returning to work during, and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic will be a high anxiety moment for many employees. They are facing many unknowns in terms of personal safety, changes in the workplace, working from home, and childcare to name just a few. Employees need to know this is a normal and expected response, and they must be provided with resources to, not just cope, but thrive. It is highly beneficial for organizations to do this. A recent study by Deloitte found that for every dollar a company spends on mental health initiatives, there return on investment is \$1.63. This program is designed to mitigate the stress, provide insight on the personal impact of stress and the unknown, and provide clarity around self-support, and the tools that can be used to have a successful return to the workplace.

Themes:

- Returning to work is a high anxiety moment.
 - What is stress and how does it manifest
 - The challenges relating to anxiety and maintaining good mental health
 - Gender differences (women feel more stress, men often experience denial)
- Address the question "is it safe to return to work?"
 - The 'New Normal' and how we got here
 - Overview of measures and protocols (specific to your organization)



- The Signs of Stress
 - A review of the key physical and emotional manifestations (sleep changes, worrying, sadness, panic, strained personal relationships, fear to seek help, substance abuse, diet changes)
 - Virtual tools for assessing stress
 - Fight/flight or freeze. Our bodies use the same primitive response for dealing with chronic stressors such as the anticipated return to work
 - Gender differences (male brain, fight/flight vs consequential thinking, rumination vs reaction)
- Non-helpful thinking styles
 - Overgeneralizing, catastrophizing, self labelling, personalizing, black and white thinking
 - Cognitive distortions (basing our responses on inaccurate perceptions of reality)

Tools:

- A primer on S.O.A.R.
 - Building resilience with Solution-Oriented Action Reframe.
- Self-care and self-soothing
 - Personalizing your approach to reducing stress
 - Popular stress-relieving activities (reading, creative endeavors, exercise, yoga, meditation, journaling, learning, nurturing conversations)
- Being authentic about what you experience
 - Addressing your concerns with a manager
 - Complaining vs requesting



- Common behaviours that hinder inclusiveness
 - How to identify the behaviors
 - Intervening in a non-blame way
 - Developing resilience, managing triggers
- Conflict resolution in this 'new normal'
 - Blame frame vs outcome frame
 - The SARA model and Triangulation
- The power of sponsoring/mentoring
 - Choosing the right sponsor or mentor
 - The gift of being a sponsor or mentor
 - MentorCloud (online tool for selecting a mentor)
- Common assumptions about work-life flexibility
 - facetime vs working at home

For Business Leaders and Managers:

- Building trust.
 - Encouraging participation and building an inclusive culture
 - Work-life balance vs work-life harmony
- Supporting employees who work from home
- Accelerating emotional safety and give empowering feedback
 - A commitment to privacy



Learning Nudges:

- Colleagues react to a back-to-work message by the company, and begin to message each other, resulting in a sense of panic and anger towards management.
- A newly hired employees feels excluded and ignored on her first day at work.
- An employee confided in a colleague that they are experiencing stress but fear the consequences of turning to a manager for help.
- An employee is encouraged to learn a breathing technique to overcome stress and anxiety.
- A manager notices an employee is left out and encourages their participation and the sponsorship of another co-worker.
- An employee is uncertain about telling her manager about her health concerns.
- A conflict arises between two colleagues over the rules about masks and who is a rule-breaker.
- A female manager ruminates over a subject and is labelled insecure and lacking confidence by her colleagues.
- An employee teases a colleague suggesting he is probably out golfing every day he is working from home.
- Two colleagues meet their new co-worker in person for the first time and privately wonder if such a large person will fit in with the team.