

Mental Health During COVID-19

Tip Sheet



The COVID-19 pandemic is not only taking a toll on our physical health, but also our mental health. Fear and anxiety are normal responses to an abnormal event such as a pandemic.

Fear and anxiety might be new to some people, while for others, it might be heightened and worsened. Especially for those essential employees still leaving the house everyday to help make sure the rest of us can stay safe at home. They can be worried about their own health, the health of their family and friends and the future of their livelihoods.

Communication as always is key and now more than ever it is so important to regularly talk to our employees to find out how they are doing and provide them with information to help calm their fears and anxieties.

Let's help protect not only our physical health, but our mental health as well. Here are some tips and resources to help, or at the very least, start the discussion of mental health in your workplace.

Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✦ Have weekly meetings to discuss the controls you have in place at the workplace to keep employees safe and for employees to raise questions or provide feedback.<ul style="list-style-type: none">✦ Barriers, hand sanitizer, increased cleaning schedules, physical distancing, PPE, screening procedures etc.✦ During your meetings, give an opportunity for employees to discuss how they, their families and loved ones are doing.<ul style="list-style-type: none">✦ How are they keeping busy at home?✦ How are they keeping safe at home?✦ How are they doing themselves? Are they struggling?✦ Do they need any more resources or help from you to cope?✦ Let employees know of any company efforts you are making to help others during this pandemic.<ul style="list-style-type: none">✦ Is your company donating to an organization in need right now, or switching gears to help other essential workers get the protection or services they need?✦ It's great for employees of all levels to know how your company is helping to make a difference.✦ Make sure all communications of facts and information are from reputable sources such as Public Health, the World Health Organization or Provincial/Federal Governments of Canada.
Personal Supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✦ Remind employees of your existing Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and resources.✦ Hand out or post in your workplace our Mental Health Resources document (included in this package).✦ If financial concerns are evident refer to the government programs or to Senior Management/Ownership for direction.

COVID-19 Resource: As of October 7th, 2020

*This document is intended to help adopt and implement best practices into your workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leadership

- ✚ Keep an open-door policy, remind employees they can talk to their managers or supervisors if they are struggling or just need to talk.
- ✚ Care for yourself! **“Don’t light yourself on fire to keep others warm.”**
 - ✚ You cannot help your employees if you are running on fumes. Recognize your own fears and anxieties and how you cope. Not only will this help you care for yourself, but it will help you relate to your employees who are also struggling
- ✚ Involve your employees. Ask for their input, thoughts and ideas and encourage their feedback. Now is the time to come together to get creative.
- ✚ Lead by example! Make sure you are taking the appropriate precautions for yourself!

Physical Controls for Mental Health

- ✚ Increased frequency of workplace inspections can help identify new hazards and allow you to put controls in place. Employees physically seeing managers or the safety committee/rep completing inspections can give them a sense of security that management is still looking for ways to protect their employees.
- ✚ Put up physical distance signs to remind employees and other personnel in your workplace of physical distances requirements.
- ✚ Barriers such as plexiglass screens at cashier stations, or reception stations give a physical barrier between employees and the public and can give employees a better sense of protection.
- ✚ Supply Personal Protective Equipment, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies at workstations gives employees control over how they can protect themselves.
- ✚ Working from home if possible, to allow your employees to stay safe at home.

Positive Messaging

- ✚ Ensure we aren’t conveying only negative facts or messages. Something as simple as saying we are safe at home, vs. stuck at home have a very different impact in a positive way.
- ✚ Put up posters on how employees can protect their mental health.
- ✚ Change out your imagery from scary looking bacteria and personnel in PPE to animals, flowers, sunshine, smiling faces etc. Promoting positivity makes positivity contagious.
- ✚ Think of creative activities to get employees engaged and communicating again (at a safe distance), such as:
 - ✚ Sending encouraging notes or meme to co-workers.
 - ✚ Employee recognition programs.
- ✚ Start each day with a positive message to help brighten employee spirits. It doesn’t have to be COVID-19 related, give them a break and an opportunity to think about something else for a few minutes.

Physical Distancing Socializing

- ✚ We may not be able to get together in person to have a work lunch anymore, but virtual lunch meetings can help bring everyone together. Order in lunch and have everyone eat on a video chat. Nothing brings people together like food!
- ✚ You can have rotating breaks. Assign employees to a coffee break partner for the day so they can get to know different employee they might not see all the time or work with.

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