

Returning to work after COVID-19: Feelings, tools and resources

Presenter – Lynn Borteck, Clinical Counselor

Hello, my name is Lynn Borteck, and today's webinar is returning to work after COVID-19: feelings, tools and resources.

Have you been asked to return to work?

So, as we know, many, many businesses are starting to reopen at this time. And all different types of businesses have to make all different types of changes in order to make it safe and healthy and as risk free as possible for their employees. And employees like yourself are certainly dealing with questions and concerns, and that's what we want to talk about today.

However, I do want to say that nothing that I'm going to be giving you is medical advice, because I'm not a doctor, and I'm also not your employer. So your employer may have special plans or procedures set up, and I'm going to be talking in general.

What are your concerns?

So what are some of your concerns? People who have been asked to go back to work might be worried about how their workplace is going to help them stay healthy, help them avoid catching COVID-19. Finding care for elders or kids, or other dependents, before they can go back to work. They might be worried about bringing COVID-19 home and also just dealing with their own fears and worries about COVID-19, and all of these are very legitimate concerns.

Staying healthy

So let's take them one by one. What will your employer be doing to help you stay healthy? Well, your employer will have a plan, and they may be taking your temperature on arrival, they may be requesting that you have COVID testing done at certain times or at certain intervals. They may be requiring masks or gloves, they may be providing hand sanitizing, they may have people coming in to do special cleanings to keep all of the surfaces at your workplace super clean. They may have added new ventilation to help keep those droplets that get people sick from spreading through the air so quickly. Surely you're going to be washing your hands a lot, as we've all gotten used to that.

And there may be other accommodations, again, depending upon what your workplace is all about and what they need to do to make it safe.

Dependent care

Secondly, what about dependent care? You can't go back to work until you have found care for people who need you. Whether that be kids or adults, so you probably, if you have kids or adults who need to be taken care of, you know about it. And I'm wondering if your former supports, what you were using before COVID, are they up and running? Have they started their business again? And if not, do you need help finding new resources? And if you do, all you need to do is call your EAP or Worklife services for free referrals and resources, and we can help you get going with that.

Bringing COVID-19 home

Then there's the concern about bringing COVID-19 home to unsuspecting family members, and perhaps you have some elderly people living with you. Nobody wants to bring home this illness.

So you might consider things like washing your hands the minute you get home, leaving your work outfit in the garage or changing right away, or even throwing those clothes in the washing machine. Some people, I've heard, go to the extent of taking a quick shower. That's up to you, but it's really important that you be aware and of course get tested if you develop any symptoms.

Beyond that, I do want to say, you should contact your own family doctor to talk about any kinds of precautions that he or she thinks you should be taking if you're going to be returning to work and you want to be very, very careful about not bringing home any unwanted germs or viruses.

Dealing with your worries and fears

Then there's dealing with your own worries and fears because just because your work is reopening doesn't mean that your worries go away all of a sudden. You certainly have emotions from these past months of social distancing and perhaps quarantining, and you want to be sure that you're okay with handling those emotions and okay with going back to work and being in that atmosphere and environment. It's important that you're able to be productive, aside from your worries.

And so, you might consider getting counseling if this is something that is really keeping you up at night, and for a lot of us, it is. And you can find counselors online, you can find counselors, again, through your EAP or Worklife services. And you can even find counselors who do televideo sessions so that you don't have to make an extra stop or go some place else. You can do the counseling and get the support right at your desk or at home, wherever you want to.

It's important that you get to feel comfortable with your coworkers on whatever terms your business has set up. Whether you all need to wear masks or you all need to stay socially distanced, these are all things that are going to be adjustments for you. And they're hard, it's not easy to have big changes and just flow with it, so give yourself a break and expect to have a little bit of readjustment time.

And, of course, stay informed in case anything changes. Maybe your business will change some of the rules, maybe they'll flex them a little bit or maybe they'll get a little bit more rigid, depending upon how things are going. But you certainly want to stay informed and also not just with your workplace, but on the national scene.

If you're unsure ... ask!

And finally, if you don't know the answer to something and you're worried or unsure, ask. Ask your manager if you have any questions about what your company is doing to keep you safe during COVID reentry. And if you want to find a very good online source, you can go to the CDC, the Center for Disease Control, that's [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), and you can go to [businesses and workplaces](#) on that site and find the most up to date information on what is being required.

Thank you very much for attending today, I know it was very short. It's meant to just give you some guidelines and some things to start with as you go back to work. And I want to wish you all good health and thank you.

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