

Mind Your Mental Well-Being

Navigating the Return to Work



As workplaces around the world begin to transition to traditional and hybrid work environments, it is natural to have feelings of uncertainty or anxiety surrounding a new normal. Here are a few tips and best practices to assist you in maintaining a healthy mind while navigating through changes.



Plan Ahead

Between unexpected life events and drastically altered routines, many of our pre-pandemic lives look significantly different than our present day lives and responsibilities. Consequently, it is vital to plan ahead when preparing to return to traditional or hybrid workplaces. Strategies such as test driving your commute and pre-packing work materials can be helpful in working through any revisions which may have occurred to public transit systems and routes since your last commute to the office. You may also consider utilizing the abundance of resources provided by your agency's [employee assistance program](#) to locate suitable options for dependent care, adult care, or simply to obtain referrals for counseling in order to discuss personal and/or work-related concerns. You can utilize OPM's [WorkLife Contact Tool](#) to find your agency EAP Coordinator.



Communicate Any Concerns with your Employer

Be sure to communicate any health or personal concerns regarding returning to work with your supervisor and/or employer in advance. Tactics such as continuing to utilize personal protective equipment and maintaining comfortable distances can be critical in lessening anxieties associated with working in person. Furthermore, communicating any personal needs prior to returning to work will give your employer a clear understanding of any expectations or personal accommodations which are required to assist you in working comfortably in an in-person environment when required.



Respect the Needs of Others

While it may be exciting to reconnect with missed coworkers, it's important to acknowledge the needs and comfort levels of others. Recognizing that everyone may be in various head-spaces is instrumental in navigating office dynamics and creating a stress-free work environment for everyone. Consider asking coworkers if they are comfortable prior to approaching them. In addition, making use of outdoor spaces to convene for lunches and meetings can ease any feelings of discomfort while allowing for socialization and reconnections.



Establish a Routine

A final way to maintain a healthy mind and reduce stress when returning to both traditional and hybrid work environments is to establish a routine to accommodate for these changes. Ensuring that you are well rested, planning appropriate time for commutes, and scheduling breaks as well as time for physical fitness can be key in making sure you are at your best while working to meet the goals and mission of your agency.

