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Return from Lockdown

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What Emotions Have We Been Experiencing?



Lockdown

- Shock
- Fear
- Need to keep safe
- Financial worry
- Worry about family and friends



Business as Unusual

- Adjusting to working from home
- Fear
- Need to keep self and family safe
- Need for purpose
- Need for outdoors
- Financial worry
- Worry about long term career prospects



Business the New Norm

- Fear of using public transport
- Fear of mingling with others
- Fear of exposing family/friends to danger
- Changed perspectives



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What Do Returners Need?

To look after their mental health, those returning to the workplace need:

- Physical and psychological safety
- Support from their line manager
- People focused leaders
- Support in looking after their mental wellbeing
- Help to feel connected with colleagues

Some people may not want to return to work, which will increase their vulnerability to mental health issues





The Impact of Self Isolating

- Adults in locations with higher levels of the virus experienced lower mental health
- Adults with existing health conditions had an increased risk of lowered mental health during lockdown
- Adults who had stopped working at higher risk of harm to their mental health.
- (Rauch & Zhang 2020)
- The main psychological impact to date is elevated rates of stress or anxiety. But levels of loneliness, depression, harmful alcohol and drug use, and self-harm or suicidal behaviour are also expected to rise. (World Health Organisation 2020)
- US people 8 times more likely to meet the criteria for moderate to serious mental illness, compared with 2018. (Twenge & Joiner ,2020)



The Impact of Self-Isolating and Implications for Work

- Just one month of confinement can negatively impact physical and mental health. (Rauch & Zhang 2020)
- Italian survey reveals 80% of people need support to cope with impact of coronavirus crisis
- There have been suicides related to the covid 19 situation (BRF ONLUS)
- Even though freedoms have been restored many people chose to stay indoors
- The World Health Organization warned last week that coronavirus “may never go away” and predicted a global mental health crisis caused by the pandemic was looming. BPS view also





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The Impact of Recovery from covid 19 and Implications for Work

What do we know about people recovering from covid 19?:

- Some people recover with no mental health issues
- Those who face the greatest disadvantages in life also face the greatest risk to their mental health. Mental Health Foundation (2020)

Some reactions to recovering from covid 19:

- Anxiety/Low mood
- Fear of further illness and hyper-vigilance to bodily symptoms
- Nightmares or flashbacks
- Poor sleep
- Impaired memory functioning
- Effects on attention, mental processing speed and executive function
- Fear of stigma or of contaminating others (BPS 2020)



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Post Covid Considerations for a Return to Work

- Traumatic realisation of loss
- Survivor syndrome
- Mistrust of colleagues
- Hidden grief
- Potential resentment of homeworkers
- Stress and exhaustion of those who continued to work
- Taking trauma related work home (BPS paper soon)





What do Managers Need to do?

- Open a dialogue with staff about what they need in order to feel comfortable returning to work
- Be open and honest
- Be very visible and build trust
- Be empathetic and encourage staff to talk about how they feel
- Help staff connect and socialise in a safe way
- Remember that staff members are individuals and will respond to covid in different ways
- Be vigilant for any signs that staff may be struggling
- Keep reminding staff of the support available internally and externally
- Be flexible with working hours
- Focus on wellbeing not productivity
- Be extra vigilant about vulnerable staff
- Maintain their own wellbeing



What Do Health and Safety Practitioners Need to do?

- Implement regular wellbeing audits to identify broad psychosocial risks and take a proactive approach to facilitating high levels of mental wellbeing.
- Encourage managers and leaders to play their roles in managing psychological risk and wellbeing.
- Keep emphasising the increased importance of preventative measures.
- Help reassure staff that their safety is paramount
- Collaborate with leaders and staff to implement wellbeing strategies that will work
- Be extra vigilant around safety critical roles e.g. drivers, pilots etc.





What do Occupational Psychologists Need to do?

- Design wellbeing audit tools and help organisations implement proactive wellbeing
- Help organisations identify and develop the best wellbeing strategy for them
- Help organisations design work and jobs to maximise wellbeing and engagement
- Coach and Develop leaders to better engage and support their workforce
- Help organisations design supportive and productive work cultures
- Train staff and managers to manage staff mental wellbeing
- Help organisations manage change processes to minimise any negative impact on staff
- Help organisations better understand the psychological impact of covid 19.
- Carry out individual cognitive assessments to determine the level of impact covid may have had
- Help struggling individuals manage post-covid symptoms



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Thank You

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See BPS Coronavirus Guidance here:
<https://www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources>