



Back to work checklist for mindful leaders

Transitioning back to the workplace is on many Canadians' minds as we focus on what will hopefully be a gradual recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. For many of us, this will be a significant change in our routines, which can bring about unique stressors. And for others, being in the workplace throughout the pandemic has come with other challenges.

Maybe you're already thinking about how you can support employees or your teammates as you move forward. Or maybe you know you need to but aren't sure where to start.

The best place to start is to take good care of your own well-being and find balance so you can be a role model for your colleagues or employees. Of course, if you're a leader, you'll also need to ensure that your workplace follows the necessary health guidelines to protect your employees.

Consider the following as you work to support your teammates or employees in the weeks and months ahead.

- ✓ **Validate the range of emotions** they're likely to experience. These will range from extreme anxiety over returning to a changed workplace to relief and excitement about getting out of isolation. By sharing up front that either extreme or anything in between is to be expected, you can help normalize these emotions.
- ✓ **Acknowledge that it may be stressful** until it eventually becomes more routine. Managing expectations in advance can allow employees to feel more comfortable with being uncomfortable.
- ✓ **Ask employees or teammates to share their fears and concerns** about returning to work or about their current circumstances at work. Addressing as many as you can will help eliminate or reduce some stressors.
- ✓ **Share how you will help protect them.** Be specific about the steps you take, any special measures you're putting in place, equipment you'll provide and how you'll deal with co-workers or clients who violate your rules.

- ✓ **Ask employees what other protection they feel they need.** Double check to see if there are other approaches that would support your employees or teammates to successfully do their jobs.
- ✓ **Take it slow in terms of expectations.** Acknowledge that for some jobs, productivity could be reduced while employees learn new processes, like the use of personal protective equipment and adjust to their new routines.
- ✓ **Celebrate and recognize effort – every day.** Help build confidence and morale by identifying how employees or teammates are rising to the occasion despite all the changes and challenges.
- ✓ **Talk about how it feels.** Every week (or more often if you can), take time to discuss how people are doing. This is about more than just how their job is going. Don't hesitate to ask them how they're coping, what strategies they're using to get through the day and how they find balance in their lives. By sharing these ideas as a team, others might be inspired.
- ✓ **Work to build resilience personally and with your team.** This has always been sound advice but learning to bounce back from challenges should be part of continual improvement for all of us. There are many free resources to help you do this. One of them, included in your box, is the Plan for Resilience. Be sure to check it out.
- ✓ **Consider becoming a Mindful Leader.** This certification will not only demonstrate your intention, it will provide you with practical approaches to resolving workplace issues and supporting employee success. Learn more at mindfulleader.me.

This checklist was created by Mary Ann Baynton and Sarah Jenner.

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