

BACK TO WORK CHECKLIST FOR MINDFUL LEADERS



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“Never give from the depths of your well. But from your overflow. – Rumi

By Mary Ann Baynton and Sarah Jenner

Leaders who are mindful are already planning for the best way to support employees when they return to the workplace. Our best advice is for those leaders to take good care of their own well-being and balance so that they can be the role model their employees need. Easier said than done, we know. Of course, you will also need to ensure that your workplace follows the health guidelines to protect employees and that will take time and energy.

But the most important task will be supporting employees to return to work successfully. The following checklist of ideas will help you with this:

Checklist:

	<p>Validate the range of emotions employees are 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, leaders can help normalize emotions.</p>
	<p>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.</p>
	<p>Ask employees to share fears and concerns about returning to work. Addressing as many as you can before the return can eliminate or reduce some stressors.</p>
	<p>Share how you will protect employees. Be specific about all of the steps you take, equipment you will provide, and how you will deal with co-workers or clients who violate your rules.</p>
	<p>Ask employees what other protection they feel they need. Double check to see if there are other approaches that would support your employees to successfully do their jobs.</p>



Checklist:

	<p>Take it slow in terms of expectations. Acknowledge that for some jobs, productivity will necessarily be reduced while employees learn new processes including the use of personal protective equipment.</p>
	<p>Celebrate and recognize effort every day. Help build confidence and morale by identifying how employees are rising to the occasion in spite of all of the changes and challenges.</p>
	<p>Talk about how it feels. More often if you can, but at least weekly, take time to discuss how people are doing. This is more than how the job is going. Ask how people are coping, what strategies they are using to get through the day, how they find balance in life. By sharing these ideas with the entire team, others can be inspired.</p>
	<p>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. Just two of them are Building Stronger Teams and Plan for Resilience.</p>
	<p>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.</p>

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