

# Returning to the Office:

Tips and tactics for managing your employees, and your own, mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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## Transitioning Back to the Workplace

*To help overcome uncertainty and change, allow the transition to be gradual and be flexible to encourage a smooth return. Communicate completely and frequently to mitigate anxiety and worry.*



### Create a safe and clean work environment.

- Establish protocols for workplace sanitization
- Maintain hand sanitizing stations throughout
- Ensure mask wearing; make masks available
- Intersperse floor decal distancing reminders
- Stagger arrivals/departures/attendance
- Provide packaged food to keep kitchens safer



### Stay connected.

- Encourage “outside of work” communications and normalize through modeling
- Promote photo sharing illustrating how we each strive for life balance
- Share tips for navigating wellness at home during the pandemic
- Encourage managers to get to know their reports: kids, parents, housing, etc.
- Host “check in” times at weekly meetings, formally and informally



### Encourage employees and partners to keep their routines.

- Reinforce self-care routines
- Schedule organization-wide, timed breaks
- Institute adaptable work weeks
- Support flex time to accommodate family balance
- Ensure access to telehealth and stress/mental health supports



### Communicate face-to-face.

- Research tells us that 7% of communication is accomplished through our words, including email.
- Use video conference with video as a rule
  - Use text messaging features for instant messaging
  - Change profile photos to reflect partner/employee preference



### Communicate early and often

- Establish and maintain rhythmic information updates
- Consider maps of the workplace to define distancing standards
- Create and enforce kitchen/common area protocols
- Maintain a partner/employee schedule each week
- Provide speakers, sessions and content to help address emerging issues



### Encouragement

- Be open and outspoken about “out of the box” ways to self-care
- Promote collaboration through shared assignments
- Encourage PTO, stycations—and respect away time
- Be proactive in reaching out and promoting emerging supports

## More Ways to Promote Wellness



### Provide easy access to healthcare and services.

- Many people with mental health conditions, and other health conditions, rely on medications as a key component to treatment and health management. Anticipate, and strive to address, the need if an employee or partner encounters barriers with healthcare supplies, healthcare access or prescriptions.
- If a company has telehealth benefits, these can be invaluable resources. Remind employees and partners of the medical and mental health care options that are available, especially those remotely accessed, as well as EAP, nurse care telephone access and other benefits.



### Check in on your teams.

- Taking steps to mitigate the potentially negative impacts of social isolation and fears of workplace uncertainty can be a proactive approach to promoting self-care. Continue to encourage mental wellbeing, offer app recommendations and ask for ideas and input.
- Encourage employees and partners to schedule short “water cooler” video calls with their work colleagues, including checking in on one another whether they are in-person or off-site.
- Engage in informal texting when appropriate.
- If you are a manager, keep, or if you don't have, set, regular check-in times with your team, collectively, to reinforce the benefits of team - including on- and off-site employees.



### Encourage movement.

- Scheduling some activity into your day will benefit your mental health, regardless of where you are on the continuum or whether you are working on- or off-site. This can include something as simple as a 10-minute walk. And finding options for exercise or activity in the office, even if a temporary fix for the pandemic, can be explored, including chair yoga, temporary treadmill areas and other strategies.

## Remember NAMI



- Many NAMI Affiliates are continuing to provide no-cost NAMI support group and education programs either in person where safe or via video or teleconference where in-person events have become a challenge.



- The NAMI Covid-19 Guide for Your Mental Health is a resource that is updated weekly with information, resources and recommendations to help people navigate their mental health during the pandemic. Available in Spanish language, too. [www.nami.org/Covid-19](http://www.nami.org/Covid-19)



- The NAMI HelpLine adapted to ensure that our vital services are available to those in need. Call 800-950-NAMI (6264) or email [info@nami.org](mailto:info@nami.org) Mon-Fri 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. ET for information, support and referrals.



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