

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Preparing to Go Back to the Workplace Again After Self-Isolation Ends

Self-isolation, lockdown, or quarantine. Whatever the measures you've followed during the COVID-19 pandemic, eventually government guidelines will allow you to return to workspaces. As you re-enter your workplace, you might find that the transition back is a difficult one. If you're returning to the workplace after a long absence due to COVID-19, we recommend the following:

Find out what to expect of your workspace when you return. Ask your manager what to expect upon your return. Think of practical barriers such as computer passwords that might have expired, or door or parking codes that are no longer valid. If your area has asked you to maintain physical distancing at your workplace, will your physical space or schedule change to reflect this? If there is a building or office manager, they might have an update for you before the return to the office.

Finalize your arrangements for personal and family needs. Going back to the workplace might mean that the routine and systems that you and your family have become used to during the pandemic may shift. If you're expected to return to the workplace, but have children whose schools are still closed, who will watch them? If you are caregiving for an older relative, who will look after them? If someone is at high-risk for COVID-19, do you have a routine for coming home at the end of the day that minimizes their exposure, such as washing your hands immediately? Having these conversations ahead of time will help make sure that expectations for you, your partner, and your family are clear.

Plan your return with your manager. It's always a good idea to check in with your manager on what priorities are, even if you've been doing this while working from home. Are there projects that you hit "pause" on at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic that will "unpause" when you're back? If you're a manager, don't forget that you should be having these conversations with your team, so that they're aware what the priorities and expectations are upon return. You might look at your calendar and schedule check-in meetings with the people you manage, and who manage you, soon after you return to the workplace.

Be kind to yourself and others. Remember that, just as it was an adjustment for you not to go to the workplace, it might be an adjustment to return to the workplace. You might be operating under new management, with new health and safety guidelines in place. Remember that it's OK if you're slow to start at your job, as long as you're doing so safely. Be mindful about those around you who might also be struggling. Before long, you'll all settle into a routine that will feel natural.

© 2026 Morneau Shepell Ltd.