

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

Managing expectations about the “new normal”

If you are feeling unsure of what to expect over the coming weeks and months, you can take solace in knowing that you are not alone—no one has ever been through something like the COVID-19 pandemic before.

As restrictions meant to stop the spread of the virus are relaxed, public spaces and retailers will open, and schools will welcome students back to the classroom if they have not already. However, even as life begins to “return to normal,” certain things will undoubtedly look different.

It is hard to say with absolute certainty what life post-pandemic will be like—especially in the coming months—so it is important to manage your expectations and prepare yourself for differences. Here are some things you might want to consider.

School

Many students around the world continue to do their schoolwork from home with the help of distance learning as well as parent-led homeschooling. However, once kids are allowed to go back to school, you should expect smaller class sizes, more time outside, and strict rules about physical distancing and hygiene.

In Denmark, school-aged children must wash their hands every two hours, and surfaces like counters, sinks, and door handles are disinfected twice daily. Similarly, daycares and schools that have reopened in Quebec, Canada are limiting class sizes and have physical distancing rules in place.

Work

Many organizations are letting employees work from home until the end of the year, while others expect that the majority of employees will continue to work at least part-time from home after the pandemic is over. Many expect the workforce to be much more mobile because the pandemic has shown that, with proper technology, people can work from anywhere.

If you do go back to a more traditional work environment, your organization may implement policies like body temperature checks before you enter the building, more physical space between employees, limits on the number of people allowed in a meeting room, and lunches eaten at desks rather than in communal spaces like kitchens and cafeterias.

Everyday life

Running your day-to-day errands will remain different for some time. The shopping experience will be different. Stores will likely continue to limit the number customers allowed inside at once, and shoppers may be required to follow directional signage to get from one side of the store to the other. Many areas relaxing restrictions are only allowing curbside pickup for non-essentials stores, and some retailers are requiring all customers to wear facemasks while shopping.

Depending on where you live, your local governments may already be allowing you to use parks and recreational trails, or your area could be exploring these possibilities. However, it’s important to remember that what may be acceptable use in one town, county, or country may be very different somewhere else. No matter where you are, it is likely that physical distancing will still be encouraged.
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These are just some of the changes you can expect, based on what has already begun to happen in countries across the world. There will likely be more changes that come as we get used to life after the pandemic. Remember that you will need to be flexible and adaptable, as changes will undoubtedly continue as restrictions relax. Some will be temporary, while other changes will become the norm.

If you are struggling with anxiety or worry due to the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought, know that this is normal. Uncertainty and the emotions that it brings with it can be difficult. Speak to your doctor, a mental heath professional, or a caring counsellor through your assistance program for support.

Stay up to date on the information and guidelines most relevant to your area by checking your government and health authorities' websites. Staying informed, following guidelines, and being patient will give you the confidence to thrive in the new reality.