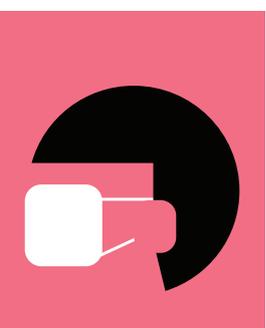




**EMPLOYEES**

# **RETURN-TO-WORK**

**UNDERSTANDING FOR ALL**





## TIPS FOR EMPLOYEES

With many offices and sites reopening their doors amid the easing of lockdown restrictions, returning to on-site work has the potential to be a stressful time for us all. As if we haven't been placed under enough change over the past eighteen months, we now continue to flex back to our 'previous' lives, however new normal and routines have been developed for our families and blurred lines of 'working from home' or 'homing from work' are now being revisited.

There are a number of reasons why you as an employee may be feeling on edge about returning to work, remember you are not alone and seeking help is important to assist you in managing your anxiety.

Here we provide some considerations for to you assist in your Return-to-Work journey.

## Commuting

If you've been working from home for the last few months, you might be nervous about using public transport again. Given the government-issued direction that physical distancing has been based around reducing the spread of the coronavirus, this is a valid concern.

The idea of going from keeping 1.5 metres away from everyone, including loved ones, to sharing a peak-hour train with dozens of other commuters, is understandably stressful.

Consider how you can car-pool with family members or non-peak transport windows. Prepare with weekend trips to ease your concerns when it isn't time sensitive.

## Sharing equipment

The nature of sharing a worksite or office space is such that you'll also be sharing a lot of the same stuff. In traditional offices, this ranges from communal bathrooms and kitchens (including cutlery) to meeting rooms, desks and computers. This is especially relevant for office workers who work for businesses that hot desk.

Construction sites, gyms and allied health studios will all face their own unique challenges when it comes to using the same equipment, as will a plethora of other industries and workplaces.

To alleviate your concerns, maintain vigilance with sanitising and feel confident to express your need for space. It's okay to ask people to stand back or wait until you've finished.

## Changing routines

While many people will be excited to return to some form of normality, there will be others that have become accustomed to their new arrangements. For those who have been working from home, you've had the opportunity to sleep in longer, wear tracksuit pants, manage your time autonomously and more.

Parents who have childcare arrangements changed, may be concerned with how to restart those arrangements without notice periods, pets may notice the change in the home with owners not there - these are all routine steps that require thinking through. Write a list of what those routine changes are and discuss them with your household to work out how everyone is going to manage moving forward.



# WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

## Voice your concerns

If you're feeling uncomfortable about returning to work, don't keep it to yourself. Be honest with your employer so you can work through any issues together. This is an unprecedented situation for them as well, and they may not be aware of things that are worrying their staff unless they are informed.

## See if flexibility is an option

While many businesses are reopening their doors, it doesn't mean that working from home is off the table completely. If your employer is still allowing remote working in some form, see if you can arrange a split between time spent in the physical workspace, and days at home. Even if it's just one or two days, it may help ease the transition and offset some of the anxiety you're experiencing.

## Talk to your co-workers

You're not going through this by yourself and the questions you have, may be shared by others. Find ways to engage others in dialogue about the realities of the situation, what is known, what is not, and the path forward. What coping strategies have they employed? If you're comfortable in being vulnerable, find ways to productively share your emotions and fears associated with the future. Let people know what you need so they can help.

## Look after yourself

You might find yourself focusing a lot of energy into going back to work, and some things can fall by the wayside. Make sure self-care isn't one of these. Continue to prioritise activities that keep you centred and happy, whether they be exercise, eating well, meditation or simply connecting with loved ones.

## REFERENCE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Forbes, 'Return to Work Anxiety? You're Not Alone', 16 March 2021

Beyond Blue, 'Tips for Managing back-to-work anxiety', 2021.

PriceWaterhouse Coopers, 'COVID-19: How to prepare, respond and emerge stronger', 2021.



**Remember, you are not alone,  
should you have any escalating  
anxiety or you feel you need  
additional support contact  
Lifeline - 13 11 14 or  
Beyond Blue - 1300 224 636.**



+61 3 9421 2206  
hello@thermc.com.au

Suite 6, 151 Barkly Avenue  
Burnley VIC 3121 Australia

therealmediacollective.com.au  
therealmediacollective.co.nz

