



ALLONE EMPLOYEE

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FACING RETURN-TO-_____ DREAD

Fill in the blank: workplace, in-person gatherings, social obligations. It may be different for every person, especially as experiences of the pandemic varied dramatically based on individual and family circumstances. Across all experiences, however, many people are facing fears, concerns, and anxiety about navigating what's next. Here are some strategies to work through those feelings and ease into a new sense of normalcy.

Acknowledge the fear.

It is completely normal to want this pandemic to be over, and to also have feelings of unease about dealing with change again. To work through fear, it helps to give it a name and be specific. Write it down, speak it out loud, or share it with a trusted friend or confidante.

Unpack the lesson.

The pandemic was in some ways a collective pause, and it gave people the time and space to be aware of some things that maybe were not working previously. Whether it was feeling overscheduled, tired of a difficult commute, unfulfilled in relationships, unhealthy, or any number of things, take a moment to reflect on personal lessons and revelations. There are ways to return to normalcy without returning to things that were not working before.

Respect boundaries.

First and foremost, knowing your own boundaries is a healthy step in moving forward. Being able to say "No," without over-explaining or justifying will help in setting and establishing boundaries. As everyone will be adapting at their own comfort level, try to maintain reasonable expectations, communicate openly, and be patient with change.

Take care of yourself.

A lot of people have experienced chronic stress, fatigue, and mental fog throughout this time, and it may have been difficult to find the time or energy for self-care. Many people also experienced increased alcohol use and substance abuse issues. Think about what your mind and body need to feel healthy, and try to get quality sleep, eat well, stay active, and engage in activities that bring joy.

Speak with a professional.

In managing anxiety, depression, substance abuse issues, or personal mental health concerns, it helps to work with a professional. Speak to a clinician through your Assistance Program to address any fears, concerns, challenges, or issues impacting your well-being. The Assistance Program is free to use, available for all family members, and completely confidential.