

COVID-19 Series

Mental Health & Wellbeing – Employer’s Perspective

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COVID-19-Mental health and wellbeing –employer's perspective

- With the general lockdown staff will either be working from home or living within their virtual bubble at home.
- Just because work as we knew it has changed, it doesn't alter staff needs and wants, it merely reprioritises them and in some cases adds more to them.
- Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 employers (PCBU's) have a duty of care to employees and this would extend to working from home. Being proactive is important. Managing work loads/timeframes/demand etc. would be seen as a reasonable duty.

Managing SELF

- In times of crises leaders need to be strong and measured but above all maintain their own wellbeing to enable them to make clear, considered decisions down the track.
- If you are unwell you cannot function well.
- You need:
 - Sleep (unaffected by alcohol)
 - Good food choices
 - Good work at home work patterns interrupted with rest.
 - Understanding that while the world has and continues to change you are only able to control a very small part of that.

Managing SELF

- Share ideas and concerns with others.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Take time for family. They are also suffering and feel your suffering. Put them at ease by including them in your daily routines.
- Don't forget to smell the roses, they are out there. You just need to look.
- If needed seek help early. Getting help late only makes the problem worse and harder and longer to resolve.
- Mental conditions (stress/fatigue) are normal, everyone has a version.
- Getting help means you're a winner. (As many don't and become ill).

Working from home or not.

- With many businesses in lockdown some will be able to organize staff to work from home.
- Some for a variety of reasons will not have the ability to have staff working from home, thus they will be at home but not working.
- Both sets of employees will have different needs and wants, however they will both benefit from the following tips.

What can you do for employees

- It's important to provide a sense of normality, i.e. while it's different now things will turn around and get back to something like we had before.
- Staff need to know you have their backs.
- Staff need to hear from you.
 - You do not need to be superhuman but rather demonstrate how you are coping. They will see similarities in this and will connect.
 - Please do not over state the post COVID-19 scene but rather keep the positive message:
 - The government is working on this
 - Various types of assistance is and will become available
 - Only follow good reliable data sources.

What can you do for employees

- We are ALL in this together. No exceptions!
- Where staff do have concerns be the broker for further assistance – avoid getting too involved.
- If possible, create you own Facebook pages for staff to access.
- Send out regular updates and newsy things, it's all about staying connected, connected with a trustful and reliable person-YOU.
- If bad news has to be delivered, do it in a style that reflects the company culture.

Tips for employees

- Get into a routine whether working or not.
- Plan and structure your day.
- Designate your workplace, set it up the way you want.
- Designate time frames especially if you have children and partners home as well
- Stay connected with your workmates – telephone, video, what ever.
- Maintain your normal work patterns. Take your regular breaks. Start and stop work at normal times.
- Remember we all have “mental health” so look after it.

Tips

- It's quite likely that we will need to accept a certain amount of distress and anxiety relating to the outbreak, in the short and medium term. If you have self-care techniques that work for you, try and make sure that you have what you need. You may need to think differently.
 - No matter how tempting, avoid working in your pajamas all day. This is likely a big change already so try not to lose all your daily routines at once.
 - Have a WEB list – W – what you **W**ant to achieve – E – what you **E**xpect to achieve – and B – what you had **B**etter achieve that day. This helps prioritise.

Thank you.

For further information, please visit the links below

- EMA's dedicated website for COVID-19
 - <https://covid19.ema.co.nz>
- Government website
 - <https://covid19.govt.nz>