



Returning to work after COVID-19 (September 2020)

We've all had a huge amount of change this year and returning back to work will be no different. While it may be the same office, and the same colleagues, and maybe even the same work, things will have changed for all of us. Our routines have been disrupted and we'll have to re-learn what works for us, getting ourselves into a new routine all over again. We may also be feeling worried or anxious about leaving the house and going back to work after such a long time.

Here are our tips for looking after your wellbeing while you return to work after lockdown:

Manage expectations

Don't expect things to be the exactly the same as they were before. Things will be different and that's okay. The changes that have been put in place will be for yours and other's safety.

Catch-up with your manager

If you are coming back to work after being furloughed, ask for a catch-up with your manager ahead of returning to work. You can use this as an opportunity to share how you're feeling about coming back and the things that are on your mind. Furlough rules are strict, so while your manager shouldn't discuss your role or the tasks ahead, it will be good for them to know what your concerns are so they can address them before you come back.

If you are heading back into the office after working from home, catch-up with your manager about how you're feeling about it, and share any concerns you may have. You can talk through what things will help you with returning to office working, so that you can feel more comfortable with the change.

Have a plan of action

Draw up a plan of action for the next couple of months – what are the projects you will be working on, and importantly, what are the little steps on each of those projects that you need to take. It can be helpful to break things down so that they aren't too overwhelming.

Recognise unhelpful habits

Make a note of anything you found difficult both during the last few months, as well as things you struggled with before COVID-19. Maybe it was keeping work separate to home life? Or snacking more at home than you did at work? Once you know what your unhelpful habits are, then you can put plans in place to manage them and look after your wellbeing.

Take your good habits with you

It's also important to think about what helped you to look after your mental health and wellbeing these past months. Maybe it was getting outside more regularly or making sure to take a proper lunch break? Write these down and make sure that you schedule time for them in your diary like you would any meeting. You might find our blog all about habits helpful, which can be read [here](#).

Say hello to people again

We know that connecting with others is great for our wellbeing, so embrace being in the same room as your colleagues again. But remember to take little steps, it might feel overwhelming to suddenly be in the same office with lots of other people when you've been working at home for so long. To help manage this, you could schedule in some quiet time for yourself for thinking and creativity.

Be kind to yourself

The most important thing is to be kind to yourself. You will get tired, and struggle to focus for the first couple of weeks – this is a natural reaction to change, we saw it at the start of the lockdown and we'll see it again. Remember to give yourself lots of screen breaks, and forgive yourself if you start to feel frustrated.

And always remember – while things are changing all the time, COVID-19 and the lockdown that followed was huge, and you got through it. We'll get through the coming months together too.