# 6 COVID-19 Recovery Plan Considerations for Employees

Organizations that have experienced a shutdown or disruption in their operations due to COVID-19 are busy making recovery plans. As an employee, you may be involved in the recovery planning work, or you may be waiting to be informed of the plan and how the workplace and work will look in the days, weeks, and months to come.

However, the organization's recovery plan is not the only one about which you should be thinking. You should also be thinking of your own recovery plan, so that you can help yourself to re-engage in the most productive way possible. Optima EAP offers the following tips for you to consider as part of your own recovery plan.

## 1) Identify your needs.

- Consider your current work responsibilities and your ability to perform them. Perhaps you need an accommodation but didn't need to request it before the organization sent you home. If you have a concern or condition that you'd like assistance with, contact your manager or HR department as soon as possible to share the situation, get information on new procedures that are being enacted, explore options, and review any documentation requirements.
- If you have general concerns, think of steps you can take to increase your comfort level. For example, prepare a personal supply of items like hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, masks, etc. that you can keep in your workspace.
- Consider your needs related to non-work situations that have been impacted by the pandemic. Examples include caregiving responsibilities, household finances, etc. Start exploring available resources, making arrangements, and devising a plan to address those things so that they don't place demands on your time and attention when your work starts ramping up again.

## 2) Prepare yourself for the return—physically.

- If your work routine throughout the shutdown was different than before, gradually re-introduce your pre-pandemic routine to your life. This could include shifting your wake/sleep and meal schedules back to what they previously were.
- If you've been enjoying wearing an at-home attire, recognize that a change of seasons occurred during the shutdown, and swap your fall/winter work clothes with your spring/summer ones to avoid a last-minute scramble when preparing to return to the workplace. Also, get comfortable in shoes again.
- If you started a healthy habit during the shutdown, like walking during your lunch break or not eating fast food, make a plan for how keep it in some way when you return to your work environment and schedule.

## 3) Prepare yourself for the return—mentally.

- Expect that there will be changes—both to the work environment and how you will be performing work. Recognize that while you may not personally agree with the necessity of some of the changes, they are done in an effort to keep employees and customers safe. Keep that in mind and have patience for things that may be an inconvenience.
- And expect that some things will return to the way they were—even if you preferred doing things as you did them during the shutdown. For example, employees who enjoyed working remotely (and did so successfully), might find that the organization has decided to return to onsite work. If you feel you have a good case for negotiating a permanent change, make it respectfully. However, if your preference is over-ruled, remain professional, even if you're disappointed.

## 4) Celebrate your successes.

- Reflect on your work during the shutdown and give yourself credit for accomplishments you achieved.
- Consider new tasks that you assumed, new skills you learned, projects you led, and ideas you offered that were adopted. Make a list of these things and plan to share them with your manager in advance of your next performance review. Keep a copy for your personal employment file.
- If appropriate, update your resume with your accomplishments and any new technologies mastered.

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5) **Be a good teammate.**

- Recognize that everyone's experience is different. Some of your colleagues may have lost a loved one to the virus. Others may have a friend who lost their small business. Others may have been dealing with anxiety that you weren't aware of and that was intensified by worries related to the pandemic. Don't expect that people will process things the same way you do and be empathetic to their feelings.
- Be sure to thank a colleague who helped you or the team in a special way during the shutdown. Perhaps the person made time to help you learn a new software application. Perhaps someone came into work so that you could stay home. Perhaps someone gave you their personal protective equipment, or let you vent when you needed it. Let them know that you appreciate their effort.
- Help your colleagues navigate new ways of doing things. Change is hard for many people—and there will likely be a lot of change when things re-open. Resist the tendency to complain and see yourself as someone whose mission is to help others. Be encouraging and focused on overcoming barriers.

6) **Note the lessons.**

- Reflect on things that you struggled with during the shutdown, or are struggling with in its aftermath. Ask yourself if there's anything you could have done differently to 1) prevent the struggle; 2) help yourself deal with the struggle; or 3) avoid a similar struggle in the future? Maybe the lesson is building an emergency fund, or staying current with technology, or doing your annual health screenings. Any challenge can become an opportunity when you learn something from it.
- Consider if the shutdown brought clarity to you in any way, like what your priorities are, what makes you happy, or what goals you want to make for yourself. Take time to craft an action plan for those things and be more intentional about living life in the way that's most meaningful to you.



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