

5 tips for coping with back-to-office anxiety



As more COVID-19 vaccines are administered, many workplaces and businesses around the country are choosing to reopen offices to employees. While the thought of going “back to normal” can be exciting for some, it can also cause feelings of fear, anxiety and stress. Many people will experience a range of both positive and negative emotions. So how can you deal with this wide range of possible reactions? Read these for tips on how to address these feelings before you head back to the office.



1. Stay up to date on health guidelines. When it comes to going back to the office, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the best resource for understanding how companies and employees can safely transition back to office work. In fact, the CDC website has an entire [section focused on workplaces and businesses](#) that offers guidance, FAQs and best practices for going back to the office. Educating yourself on what is recommended by medical experts can help ease the uncertainty, fear and stress of transitioning to in-office work.



2. Set boundaries on possible stress triggers. If you find that you feel more anxious after talking to certain people, scrolling social media or watching the news, try limiting your exposure to these stress triggers. While it’s important to stay up to date on the latest health guidance, it’s equally important to keep in mind that you can easily become overwhelmed by a constant stream of information. Practicing mindfulness and setting healthy boundaries here can help lower your stress levels overall.



3. Talk to your doctor. If you have an underlying condition that prevents you from getting vaccinated or makes you more vulnerable to a COVID-19 infection, it's important that you speak with your doctor before returning to the office. They will have the best understanding of your health and whether or not it's possible for you to return to the office safely.



4. Name the feeling. One of the best ways to cope with feelings of fear, uncertainty and stress around going back to the office is to talk about it. In particular, it can be helpful to talk about these feelings with a licensed therapist or mental health professional who can listen and provide coping mechanisms for you based on your unique health needs.



The number one thing to do is to take into consideration what exactly is driving that anxiety: are they realistic roadblocks for you in terms of childcare needs, health issues, etc.? Or maybe even just the reality of returning to a stricter schedule? Once you've identified the cause(s), you can begin to solve for them. It's also important to recognize that almost every one of us is feeling the same way. It's completely normal to have anxiety about this situation. We have been hit by anxiety-provoking twists and turns for so long at this point that our brains are stuck on fight-or-flight mode. We need to learn to say to our brains, 'Thanks for looking out for me, but I'm good.'" **Julia Hoffman, PsyD, head of mental health strategy at Teladoc Health**



5. Talk with your employer. Every company will have a different approach to going back to office work. If you're feeling fearful or anxious about going back to the office, or if you have unique health circumstances that prevent you from returning to the office, make sure to discuss these things with your manager or a member of the company's human resources team. It can be helpful to write down your thoughts and questions before sitting down to have a discussion. Also, be compassionate, understanding that your employer will have their own unique stresses and concerns about reopening the office safely.



By following these five tips, you can feel better equipped to handle the range of emotions that may accompany a return to the office. By talking with your doctor, staying informed and reducing your stress triggers, you can feel prepared to make the best decisions for you and your family.

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