

Employee Emotional Health – Actions to Take Now



The impact of COVID-19 displaced not only day-to-day life but also normal routines, habits, and sense of consistency at both the workplace and at home. It's no surprise that during these unprecedented times, a natural human response is to feel confused, isolated, and scared – which directly affects the state of our mental health. Fortunately, there are strategies and resources available to help you and your employees navigate this extraordinary situation.

1. Maintain Hope and Positivity

Maintaining a sense of hope may be hard for some, but staying positive is within our reach. In an article by [Greater Good Magazine, Are You Getting Enough Positivity in Your Diet](#), Dr. Frederickson a scientist at the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley, has a lot to say about positivity. Research by Dr. Frederickson and Marcel Losada concluded there is a tipping point for positivity to have an impact. That ratio is at least three positive emotions for every negative emotion. When this ratio of three-to-one is used, it can help individuals flourish and be remarkably resilient during hard times. Here are some reminders you can communicate with your employees to help:

- When having a rough day, write down three positive things that happened and see if it helps turn your day around.
- Watch for the good in evening news or social media feeds. Create an internal blog or area

where employees can share positive news such as how their team navigated a difficult situation given the crisis, an encouraging outcome, or similar news.

2. Modify Expectations

The pandemic has placed a considerable emotional load on everyone and, frankly, it impacts productivity not to mention having to find new ways to work. Your employees may be struggling with completing daily tasks and staying focused on big projects.

- Have managers help their employees set smaller goals and create shorter task lists in order to be productive.
- Remind your employees that it's okay and to take some time to adopt the new normal and develop daily habits to produce the results needed.

3. Address Stress Daily

While remote environments are likely getting a bit stale for your employees and maybe for you as well, emotions are varied and can change dramatically from day to day. Don't wait to address the stress employees might be feeling. Consider providing information on mindfulness techniques. These techniques can help your employees feel grounded by actively thinking in the present, and not dwelling on the past or future

according to [Psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com). Studies have shown that individuals who practice mindfulness exhibit lower stress levels, protection against anxiety and depression, and focus less on negative feelings.

- Check with your vendor partners for articles, helpful apps, and other resources on mindfulness and addressing stress that you can share with your employees.

4. Watch for Signs of Distress

Despite efforts of being proactive and taking steps to address emotions associated with the current pandemic, there may be a time when anguish sets in or more severe feelings of depression and anxiety are present. Remind your management teams of signs to look for. Ensure you are promoting services from your benefits program such as an Employee Assistance Program, Telehealth services, and health and well-being programs that focus on resiliency and emotional support.

5. Follow a Daily Routine

Depending on your organization, you may have had telecommuting employees already. However, for many, telecommuting is a new experience and they may feel disconnected from routine, peer camaraderie, and learning how to juggle the new reality of remote work. Our recent article, [Tips for Managing the New Normal of Remote Work](#), offers some great reminders you can leverage.

6. Lead with Compassion and Empathy

With so little we can control, it can be easy to minimize or forget how much we impact others with our words and behaviors. Being compassionate or empathetic during tough times may be challenging because it could be assumed that we are all experiencing this situation the same way and going through the same emotions. The fact is that couldn't be further from the truth. It's

going to require a balance of compassion and empathy when dealing with the emotions of others as well as our own.

- Remind employees at all levels that being mindful, kind, and patient is important
- Instill an attitude of gratitude in your workforce
- Encourage thoughtful gestures such as thank you notes among employees.

7. Cultivate Meaningful Connections

Connecting to others and building or maintaining meaningful relationships is core to who we are as humans. Encourage employees to connect with fellow employees to see how they are doing, how they are navigating challenges they may be experiencing, and build that team bond. In fact, they might be surprised at how those check-ins begin to make them feel more connected than before.

As you proceed through the next phase for your organization, remind your employees that a call for help is not a sign of weakness. It's okay. This goes for you as well. Many HR professionals are having to make very difficult decisions or give hard news right now. It's important to take care of yourself with these tips as well. There are going to be ups and downs as you and your employees navigate this and what's to come.

We understand that COVID-19 has ushered in an unprecedented new reality with a far-reaching impact on families and businesses. Alliant is here to support you.

Alliant has helpful tools and resources to help your organization address employee mental health and navigate the return to work process. In addition to employee benefits, we offer services to help protect the rest of your business in response to COVID-19 including property and casualty, workers' compensation, underwriting, surety, and financial products and services. Ask your Alliant representative for more information or visit alliant.com