

## Managing working relationships as our working patterns Change.

Now that people have begun to return to the workplace again it's time to look at how we manage working relationships within the "new normal"

For many it has been 18 months since being in the office environment with the challenges that brings. It is so different to physically see people rather than via a Zoom or team meeting platforms. We have to remember that for as many people who are excited and pleased to be physically back into the office, there will be those who feel anxious and upset when having to return.

Some of this anxiety comes from being at home for so long and establishing your routine to manage within that environment; it has worked for you, you felt safe and secure from the risk of Covid 19, from any workplace issues and personalities that bothered you previously. There was also no longer the need to commute to work but now, all that has changed. The difference with this change is that we have gradually worked toward the return whereas the change to work from home came suddenly. One day in the office the next, working from home for what we all thought then would be just a few weeks. None of us could have imagined that the home working situation would last this long.

On returning to the office environment we need to remember that the change will be the same for us all but that we will all manage it differently. The office will look different from when you left it 18 months ago, you may not be seated in the same way so not only will there be the change of going back but also returning to a "different office"

It is important that we are all tolerant of each other particularly if we know a colleague is struggling so what can we do?

- Reach out to colleagues in advance of the return to check how they are and how they feel about returning to the workplace.
- Plan to have a coffee with them in advance of the return (if appropriate)
- Let them know that you are aware it is a challenging and scary for some

If you are a manager make contact with the whole team before the return and offer reassurance for those who may be feeling anxious. It may help to plan for the first couple of weeks. Don't try and do too much and be sure to build in rewards and time to do things you know boost your mental health.

Once you are back, what can you do to build and manage that important working relationship with colleagues? If you are going back to commuting, or being around people for much of the day, there's going to be a lot of adjustment.

- Be aware of how much going back takes out of you
- Make sure you rest any change is exhausting in the short term.
- Communicate often
- Be consistent and trustworthy.
- Avoid gossip.
- Support fellow team members.
- Remain positive in interactions.
- Appreciate Others Everyone wants to feel that their work is appreciated. So, genuinely compliment the people around you when they do something well. Praise and recognition will open the door to great work relationships.

"The more comfortable co-workers are around one other, the more confident they'll feel voicing opinions, brainstorming, and going along with new ideas, for example. This level of teamwork is essential to embrace change, create, and innovate. And when people see the successes of working together in this way, group morale and productivity soars.

Good work relationships also give you freedom. Instead of spending time and energy dealing with negative relationships, you can, instead, focus on opportunities – from winning new business to focusing on personal development.

And having a strong professional circle will also help you to develop your career, opening up opportunities that otherwise might pass you by" (*Mind tools.com*)

If you feel you may need some emotional or practical support, you can contact Care first on the Freephone number. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. Whilst our BACP accredited Counsellors are available 24/7 to provide support with emotional issues, our expertly trained Information Specialists are available 8am-8pm Monday-Friday to provide advice on any practical issues that may be causing you a stress or worry and help you feel more in control of a situation.

All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

If you would like to view the Webinar on this is being delivered live on **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> September at 12pm**, please use the below link to register for this session – <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2312502069194821133>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.