

Welcome Back to a Returning Employee

We are very happy to welcome you back to the department and back to your team. We invite you to undertake these next steps mindfully, as returning to work will be a transition for you.

In consulting with many employees who have been on disability and experienced *returning to work* after an extended absence, there are a few messages that you might find particularly helpful:

- **Be patient with yourself.**

The first days back to work may require a great deal of energy, as is the case with any return to work after an extended absence. So don't be alarmed. It is also quite normal to feel some anticipation as we prepare to reconnect with people and our day-to-day functions. In addition to these normal stressors, we face the actual physical demands of being on the job all day long. It is quite normal to feel some fatigue at the outset. Be patient with yourself.

- **Reestablish your place on the team.**

It is normal to want some clarity regarding your priorities, the management of the backlog, if applicable, etc. Your manager will bring you up-to-date on changes that have occurred in the unit during your leave and review your work assignment with you. Getting your bearings is a process, and often starts from clarifying questions. Take in what you can, and pace yourself.

- **Have reasonable expectations of yourself and others.**

Just as you may be experiencing some anticipation as you return to work, so might your colleagues. They too may be a little stressed and want to understand how you are feeling or how they can help for your return to go smoothly. Communication is key to understanding the various needs and concerns of ourselves and others. Your colleagues may seem a little awkward at first not knowing quite what to say or how to welcome you back. Do your best to assume their intentions are positive since this is an adjustment period for you and them.

- **Don't take change personally.**

In an ideal world, we would always have a say in changes made to our tasks and overall work environment. But sometimes, changes naturally occur in our absence, as people try to cope with the demands on the team. It is not uncommon for people to return to work and find: a rearranged a desk, reshuffled seating in the office, a tweaked process, changes in expectations, a new colleague, or perhaps a need to learn a new skill (e.g. a new system is implemented).

Try not to take the changes that have been made personally. Change is a constant. Ask what has changed and seek to understand what about the change is important. In the face of a change, explore what you might need in order to function optimally (e.g. access to a system, training, one-on-one meetings with colleagues for updates, a list of unit priorities).

See how these changes can benefit you in your role, and how your unique perspective/experience can gradually inform these new developments, now that you are back.

- **Ask for help.**

No matter how much you may value your job, returning to work may be harder than expected. You have had an experience that has perhaps changed you, or at least changed your focus for a time. You may feel like you are returning to the “unknown.” You may also wonder about your colleagues’ responses to you, their assumptions, etc.

It is important not to isolate yourself nor to feel that you have to over-explain your situation. If work related issues or concerns emerge, seek your supervisor’s ear, understanding, advice, etc. Know that you also have an HR Advisor or Direct Services Representative available in your area to guide you.

If issues go beyond the workplace, please remember that our Employee and Family Assistance Program (1-844-880-9142) is there to provide you with entirely confidential support services for psychological, legal and financial questions.

- **Give us feedback.**

While we have done our best to anticipate how best to help you with your return to work, we count on your unique experience to help us help other employees too. As you settle back to work, please share with your contact in Disability Management or a member of the MyHealthy Workplace team just how we can best prepare our returning employees and their supervisors to ensure a positive step forward.

Welcome back!