

Psychological Coping Tips for Staff Working from Home during Outbreak

Many companies extend the period for staff to work from home to help reduce the risk of contracting the Novel Coronavirus. While the latest virtual technology has helped combating reduced work performance and morale by connecting teams that work remotely, there are known psychological risks by remaining socially isolated and possibly lacking accountability for a prolonged period of time. These include: low mood or depression, boredom, irritability, lassitude, anxiety, "cabin fever," excessive worries or risks of obsessive-compulsive behaviours, reduced cognitive functions such as impaired memory and concentration, and increased poor health habits such as smoking and excessive alcohol consumption or snacking.

What could business leaders and companies do to counteract these challenges and manage these risks?

Without stating the obvious, albeit necessary to be reminded during crisis, here are some practical tips on personal psychological care and what companies could do:

Personal Self Care:

A) Mind and Attitude:

- Focus on the objective facts and positive elements such as scientific data from the WHO and time for preparation and strategizing when work is slower
- Think medium and long term, instead of preoccupation of the immediate crisis
- Believe in cyclical trends of the market
- Exert some sense of control within reach over upcoming changes
- Stay optimistic by recalling past successes in overcoming crisis
- Be gracious and thankful by faith

B) Behavior:

- Disclose one's emotions to loved ones
- Listen to and sing upbeat and inspirational music and songs
- Draw or paint more
- Play with children and pets
- Read personal growth and self-help books
- Limit duration of exposure to negative 24/7 news
- Delay making major decisions while under distress
- Continue aerobic and stretching exercises
- Exposure to sunlight, nature and humor such as watching comedies

It is imperative for many companies to offer support and not miss opportunities to care for their staff at this challenging time.

Organizational Measures:

- Maximize technology with intermittent video conferencing throughout the work day
- Periodic input by leaders to role model care, courage and inspiration
- Leverage international teams' moral and logistical support whose work patterns are not severely impacted by the COVID-19



- Organize small check-in small work groups to support and hold each other accountable and facilitate conversation that ends with encouragement
- Sponsor charitable activities in meeting the needs of the needy during the health crisis
- Make tele-medicine platforms available to staff who require offsite medical care

According to the best-selling US author Mark Sanborn, he wrote in "Encore Effect" that remarkable performers do two things in life regularly:

- A) They prepare as conscientiously and thoroughly as they can
- B) They remain on the lookout for those random events and circumstances, as well as self-inflicted problems, that could ruin their performance

The present COVID-19 global health crisis, perhaps, is one of those unexpected events that could impair one's health and work performance. It would be shrewd to remain prepared, not being our own worst enemies by neglecting optimal psychological self-care. Well-planned and executed human resources strategies could also help reduce poor work performance and health risks by offering innovative support to staff who work from home.

Stay well!



Author: Dr. Tommy Chan, Ph.D., PCC is a registered clinical psychologist and certified executive coach, practicing at the Matilda International Hospital and Medical Centre in Central, in addition to coaching executives of multinational corporations in APAC.

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在家工作的心理管理策略

不少人在家工作的日數不斷延長，以避免感染新型冠狀病毒的風險。嶄新的網上科技能讓員工遠端工作及保持聯繫，以減低對工作表現和士氣的影響，然而員工在社交上有如長時間被孤立，或欠缺了一份承擔責任的感覺，因而引致情緒低落、抑鬱、沉悶、煩躁、無精打彩、焦慮、幽閉煩躁、過分憂慮的情況，甚至出現強逼症行為的傾向，令認知能力削弱，如記憶下降、難以集中，以及助長不良習慣形成的機會，如抽煙、過度飲酒和吃零食。

企業或公司究竟如何對應這些挑戰和做好風險管理呢？以下是一些實用小貼士，讓打工一族妥善管理好心理健康之餘，公司也可提供協助。

儘管部分建議或顯而易見，但在充滿危機感的時刻，也必須再次提醒大家：

個人自我護理：

甲) 思維和態度

- 關注客觀事實和專注正面資料，例如來自世界衛生組織的科學數據；當工作沒有太忙碌的時候，可花時間作好準備和做策略性的工作
- 不要著眼於當前危機，可考慮到中長期部署
- 相信市場的周期趨勢
- 對即將發生的變化，在可行範圍內作控制性措施
- 回想過去克服危機的成功經歷，盡量保持樂觀
- 以恩惠和感恩的心去面對

乙) 行為

- 向親人至愛分享感受
- 聆聽和唱出一些鼓舞人心和正面的歌曲
- 多畫畫
- 多跟兒童和寵物一起玩耍
- 閱讀個人成長和自助書籍，或收聽正面樂觀的發聲書籍 (audio books)
- 限定自己閱讀負面新聞的時間
- 受壓和感到懊惱時，可延遲一些重大的決定
- 堅持做運動，包括帶氧和伸展運動
- 多曬陽光，走到郊外接近大自然，保持幽默，例如觀看喜劇

在這個充滿挑戰的時刻，許多公司應給予員工支持，不要錯過照顧員工的機會。



公司層面上的措施：

- 利用科技全天候無間斷支援視像會議
- 管理層作好榜樣，不時鼓勵員工、表示關心和顯示勇氣
- 利用跨國團隊賦予後勤支援，因其工作或未受到新型冠狀病毒的嚴重影響
- 組織工作小組，讓員工互相扶持、彼此一同承擔責任，促進溝通的同時，也藉此互相鼓勵和推動對工作的信心
- 在這艱難的危機時刻，多支持慈善活動，扶持弱勢社群
- 為有需要的員工提供網上醫療諮詢平台

跟據美國暢銷書籍作家Mark Sanborn在《加演效應》(Encore Effect) 書中的描述，傑出的表演者經常在生活中做兩件事：

- A) 他們會盡力認真地作準備
- B) 他們會時刻留意那些可能會破壞他們演出的隨機事件和情況，包括自身的問題

我們可以預現到新型冠狀病毒會構成全球危機，影響到我們的健康和工作表現。應付疫情的權宜之計是持續妥善準備；忽視個人心智的管理反而令病毒變成我們最大的敵人。精心規劃和人力資源策略若執行得宜，再配合多方面的支持，則有助減低欠缺效益的工作表現和健康風險。

最後祝大家身體健康！



作者: 陳慶滿博士

陳博士為註冊臨床心理學家，於明德國際醫院和中環明德醫療中心應診，並持有企業教練證書，為亞太區跨國提供行政人員的訓練。

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