

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' morale 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!



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