

WayAhead Workplaces

Post Lockdown Workplace Guide

Helping you transition back into the workplace

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Introduction

This guide has been created to offer support to WW members during this transitional period as lockdowns in Australia ease and once again the way we work changes. It is not news that the global pandemic has had a significant impact on workplaces and the health and wellbeing of employees for a range of reasons. Suddenly, we went from working with peers, mostly from an office or an external location where we had access to tools to do our work, colleagues to share with and managers to support us, to being locked in our home attempting to do work from the kitchen table, while home schooling children and no colleagues to connect with in person. And this was if we were one of the lucky ones who was able to continue working at all. Those working in customer facing roles in retail, hospitality, the beauty industry plus the arts and so many more weren't able to go to work at all. Teams became disjointed, leaders suddenly had additional concerns about their teams and how to support them.

The good news is that the focus on mental health in the workplace has shifted from a nice to have, to an essential item on the agenda and there is more and more focus on employee wellbeing in the mainstream. The downside of this, is that there is a lot of content being produced, not all of it based on research and much of it conflicting and confusing. This guide aims to cut through the noise and touch on some of the key issues Australian workplaces will be facing in the short and medium term as well as link out to other available resources to help make this complex time that little bit easier.

This guide has been developed in partnership with WW Member, Transitioning Well, who are leading experts in all things workplace wellbeing and life transitions.



1. RE-ENTRY ANXIETY

Re-entry anxiety is also known as 'reverse culture shock'. Coined by US psychologists Jeanne and John Gullahorn in the 1960s, reverse culture shock describes the feeling of disorientation when rejoining society after being away from home for long periods.

For many people, returning to life as 'normal' presents feelings of unease. Amid close to two years of intense uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and isolation — the many ups and downs have taken an emotional toll.

We are neurologically wired to find uncertainty aversive. We perceive ambiguity as a threat, our brains try to protect us by creating certainty. Both consciously and unconsciously we're trying to create certainty by predicting what might happen and figuring out options, but there is no clear answer. This can trigger sensations of fear, anxiety and worry.

Now, our bandwidths are full, and we might be feeling less than excited about going back to the lives we were once leading pre-pandemic.

How comfortable we feel transitioning back to life after lockdown is influenced by many factors. Our pre-isolation wellbeing, our experiences during lockdown, our strategies to navigate our post-lockdown lives, and the amount of support we perceive we have (Norris, 2020)

Practical strategies to navigate re-entry

Slowly reconnect & reintegrate

- Reconnect with friends and family at your pace – be aware of pressures to 'make up for lost time'.
- Everyone will have different comfort levels. Engage socially as YOU feel comfortable. This may involve having conversations with people to understand their comfort level.
- Consider a gradual social re-entry – start with small incremental steps if needed.
- Decide if you have to (or want to) go back into all your old activities and routines at once.
- Create pauses in your day to keep the pace slower.
- Prioritise sleep and opportunity for rest.
- Discuss options at work for a hybrid work arrangement or a gradual return to the office/workspace.



Accept what we can't control

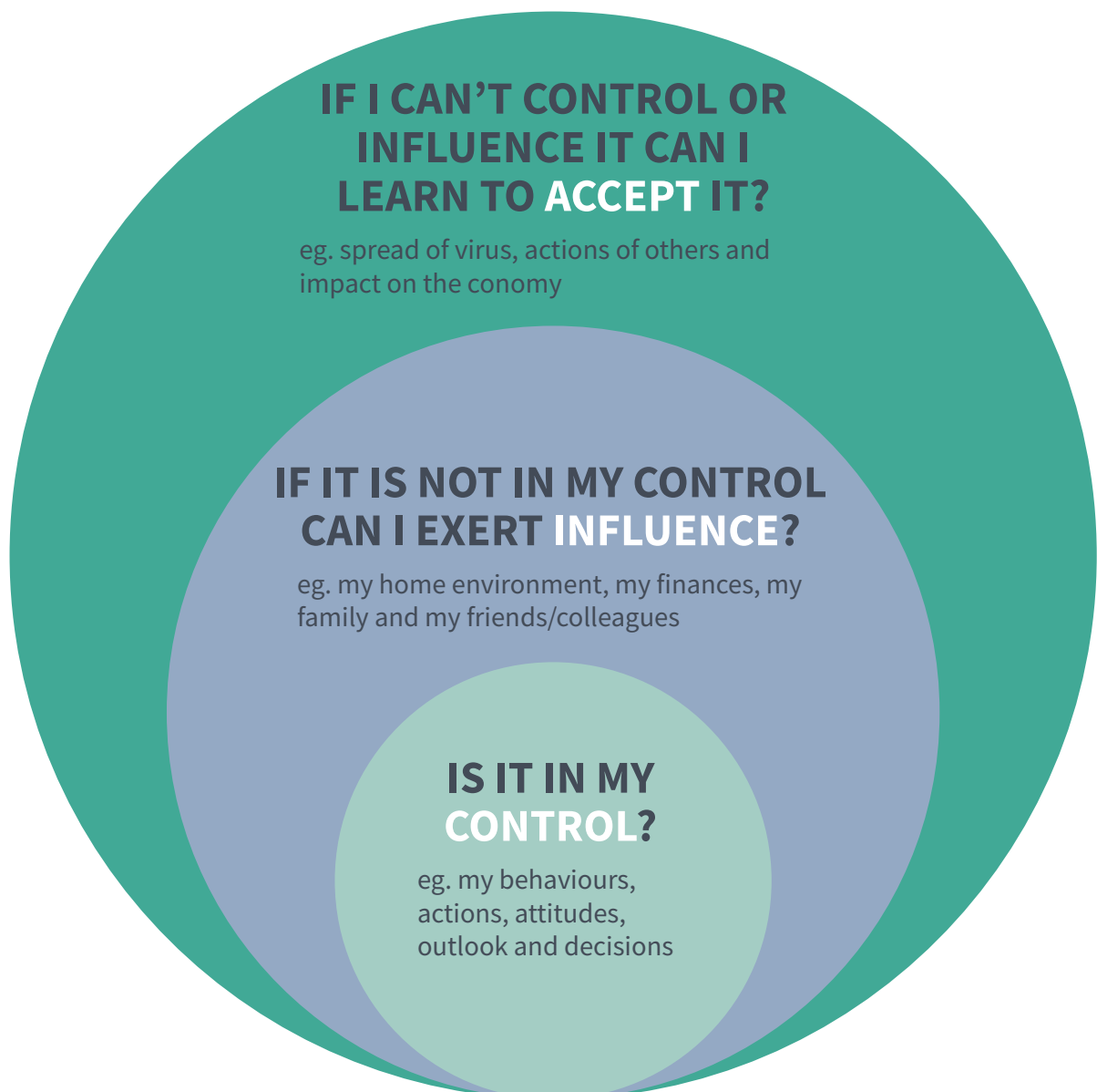
Stephen Covey's CIA tool can help break a problem down so it is less overwhelming.

Working from the outside in, categorise your worries into those which can:

ACCEPT - these concerns are outside of your control and influence. Try to let these go and focus on what you can influence and control.

INFLUENCE - be realistic about the concerns you can influence. Score your influence on a scale of 1-10 and any concern scoring lower than a 5, move to 'Accept'.

CONTROL - direct your time and energy towards the elements that you can control. This will minimise feelings of overwhelm and frustration.



Routines and rituals

Establishing routines and rituals can be protective at times of transition.

- Establish a strong routine and write it down:
 - » Creates a sense of security, stability and control in times of change.
 - » Helps us understand what to expect in a day/morning/evening.
 - » Frees up our minds to think about more complex things and reduces stress in the process.
 - » Make time for things you enjoy.
- Incorporate rituals:
 - » Create a boundary in time.
 - » Find ways of helping our mind and body move from one way of being to another, like a bridge.
 - » Light a candle; listen to music; journal, changing into pyjamas to signal the end of the day.

Supporting people in the workplace experiencing re-entry anxiety

As a manager or even a peer, you are likely going to have people you work with who are experiencing re-entry anxiety. There are a few ways you can support these people – by sharing the above suggestions and pointing them to the below resources.

Resources:

Adjusting to the 'new normal':

- [After COVID-19, what will 'normal' life be like? - Black Dog Institute](#)

The path back from social isolation:

- [GUIDE](#)
- [Short Course](#)

Do an 'Online Wellbeing Check' by SuperFriend:

- [Wellbeing check-in and action plan - SuperFriend](#)

Other resources

- [The Coronavirus made us socially awkward \(NY Times\)](#)
- [Reverse Culture Shock \(ABC\)](#)

Re-Entry Anxiety: Normalising re-entry in a post lockdown world

Workshop delivered by one of Transitioning Well's experienced organisational psychologists. Email info@transitioningwell.com.au for more information on how to book a session in your workplace.



2. RETURNING TO THE OFFICE & HYBRID WORK

While there are still many unknowns when it comes to the pandemic, one truth exists; Covid-19 has changed the way we live, work and play. Although many of these changes have been challenging, they have also created new opportunities. As we begin to figure out what ‘the new normal’ will look like, many organisations and employees are recognising the benefits of a hybrid workplace - one where employees can work from home (WFH) and work from an office (WFO).

A Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study found that 88 per cent of business leaders expect a hybrid way of working in the future. In Australia, 76 per cent of managers believe their staff will continue to work from home more often (PWC, 2020).

Hybrid workplaces offer a range of opportunities to organisations and employees, however, like any major change, there are significant challenges.

| Challenges | Opportunities |
|---|---|
| Maintaining innovation | More flexibility |
| Loss of collaboration and increased isolation | Increased autonomy and productivity |
| Communication challenges | Limited commute |
| Fairness and equity (socioeconomic, domestic duties, gender, personality differences) | Increased opportunities for engagement |
| Breakdown of organisational culture | More time for friends and family |
| Career progression | Decreased environmental footprint |
| Boundaries (work and life) | Potential financial savings for individuals and organisations |

Navigating the new hybrid workforce

With some planning and preparation, organisations can mitigate the risks and capitalise on the opportunities.

Clarify what hybrid structure works best for your organisation

There is no one-size hybrid model. Some organisations will have set office days, while others may let team members decide when to come in. Some will re-design offices as ‘collaboration hubs’ while others may forget offices all together and sign their employees up to co-working spaces. There is no right or wrong here, all that matters is to design your structure to meet your organisation’s unique needs.

Establish and explain the new reality. It is important to not keep employees in the dark when it comes to transitioning to a hybrid workplace. The best organisations co-create changes with their employees, keeping them educated and involved throughout the process.

Uncertainty and change is inevitable. Throughout this transition there is going to be a lot of uncertainty and unexpected changes. Try to remain flexible and continue to learn as you go. We are all in new territory.



Communication, Collaboration and Culture

Spend time thinking about your organisation's communication tools, processes and structures. It is important that communication in your organisation changes to reflect the new way of working. When do you use chats? How do you communicate time-sensitive information? When does something need to be a phone call?

Remote first. Even if most of your employees are in-office, it is best to make communication happen virtually first. This will help ensure there are no information gaps and create an equal dynamic.

Centralise HR digitally. Make sure employees can access HR resources and contacts no matter where they are working from.

Have dedicated cross-over and collaboration time. It can be useful to have designated time where employees are in the same location and working at the same time. It's best to prioritise this time as collaborative time.

Create virtual 'water cooler moments'. Informal conversation is vital for culture. Build a system for internal socialising and allocate portions of your digital communication to non-work-related things (e.g. have dedicated slack channels for hobbies/interests, give 5-minutes before a meeting to catch-up with each other).

Teams with a shared purpose tend to be buffered against drops in communication. When possible, build cohesion and a shared purpose into your teams.

Be aware of in-group/out-group dynamics. It's important to make sure all employees feel united. It is possible for a 'rift' to grow between remote and office employees. Good communication, strong leadership, a shared purpose and equal recognition can stop this from occurring.

Equity and Support

Make it fair between remote and in-office employees. Visibility and career progression can be a challenge for employees who prefer remote working. Make sure recognition, feedback, rewards and promotions are distributed fairly across the organisation.

Shift to outcomes rather than hours. To make the most of remote work, teams should focus on outcomes rather than hours. Where possible, support your organisation in making this switch.

Ensure teams and employees are supported to set up productive office spaces. Creating a productive home office can take time and money. Ensuring your employees are supported to do this will pay dividends in the long run.

Pay attention to fairness and equity. Not everyone will respond to a hybrid workplace equally. Organisations need to consider the role of domestic responsibilities, socioeconomic factors and personality differences when setting up hybrid workplaces.

Make employee wellbeing a priority. Everyone will respond and adjust to hybrid work differently. Consider how you are checking in on people and what resources are available for them

Invest in training. Consider what training is needed to help employees' transition to a new way of working. This could be learning new software or upskilling managers to lead virtual teams. It's important all employees feel equipped and supported to work in this new way.

Resources:

Find out more about COVID-19 Medicare Funded Support:

- [COVID-19: Medicare funded psychology services | APS](#)

The path back from social isolation – a guide by Professor Kim Norris

- [A COVID 19 Resource for business leaders and employers](#)

iCare COVID 19 Factsheets

- [Factsheets on a variety of essential topics for employers and managers](#)

Do an 'Online Wellbeing Check' by SuperFriend:

- [Wellbeing check-in and action plan - SuperFriend](#)

Other Resources

- [Hybrid Working in Australia \(Swinburne\)](#)
- [What Psychological Safety Looks Like in a Hybrid Workplace \(HBR\)](#)
- [The Five Work Models Emerging from the Pandemic \(SMH\)](#)
- [Four Principles to Ensure Hybrid Work is Productive Work \(MIT\)](#)

Hybrid Work Series Workshop/Webinars

Part 1: Transition to Hybrid: Navigating the early transition to hybrid work and return to office

Part 2: Making Hybrid Work: Navigating the long game of hybrid work and tools for transition

Flexibility 2.0: Redefining flexible work in a post pandemic world

Workshops delivered by one of Transitioning Well's experienced organisational psychologists. Email info@transitioningwell.com.au for more information on how to book a session in your workplace.



3. SUPPORTING WORKFORCE EXHAUSTION

“While employers are investing more in mental health, the same priority isn’t being given to workforce exhaustion. This is the number-three people risk overall, but it ranks down in 14th place in terms of steps being taken to address it.”

MERCER MARSH BENEFITS REPORT

Workforce exhaustion refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources. It emerges from prolonged exposure to chronic stressors, and it is therefore unsurprising that we are seeing a dramatic increase in the rates of exhaustion in the workforce currently. We know that emotional exhaustion often precedes burnout, so intervening early can help to reduce rates of exhaustion and mitigate the risk of widespread burnout in our organisations.

In the covid-context, it’s estimated workforce exhaustion is contributing to the ‘Great Resignation; with 73 per cent of working professionals reporting experiences of burnout and exhaustion (BLIND, 2020).

Organisations have a unique opportunity to embrace their own ‘fresh start moments’ to establish sustainable and effective ways of working that support the wellbeing, productivity and renew the energy and motivation of their workforce.

Tools for re-energising your workforce

Co-create the future of your organisation

- People are looking to their employers to define what the ‘next normal’ will be.
- People desire a greater degree of freedom over the way that they work:
 - » The majority of people (66%) want flexible working to become the new normal ([World Economic Forum, 2021](#))
 - » Almost a third of the workforce indicated that they would look for a new employer if asked to return to the office full-time ([World Economic Forum, 2021](#))
 - » People want more control over the way they work – so why not co-create the future of your organisation with your people.

Tools for co-creating the future

- Leader Listening Tours.
- Organisation-wide survey/s.
- 1:1 chats with representative members of the organisation.
- Crowd source insights through an online platforms (e.g., Bang the Table).
- Share the organisation’s view on what the future of work will look like.
- Revisit organisational values:
 - » What has become more (or less) important?
 - » How can our values help people to navigate the current situation, or do they need a refresh?

Create clear boundaries

- The pitfall of flexible working: ‘Availability creep’:
 - » Many employees are feeling the pressure to be always available for work.
 - » In a recent study, over one third of respondents indicated that they feel an obligation to be available 24/7 for their workplace ([McKinsey & Company, 2021](#))
 - » Leads to inadequate psychological recovery from work.

Clear boundaries enable psychological recovery:

- » Research indicates that clear and predictable boundaries explicitly defined by employers supports people’s wellbeing and recovery from work.
- » These behaviours and associated attitudes need to be explicitly called out and modelled at all levels of the organisation.

Tools for creating clear boundaries

- Focus on outcomes, not hours: trust and empower people to self-manage and complete work.
- Explicitly state what is and is not expected of employees.
- Discourage overwork and role model a balance between work and home (clear work-life boundaries).
- Celebrate creative problem solving.
- Understand different approaches to work-life boundaries (i.e. Work-Life Boundary Management Styles—integrators, segmentors and cyclers).
- Build your knowledge of different ‘Boundary Management Tactics’ and support your people to build this capability.

Make wellbeing conversations the norm

“40 per cent of people say their company has not even asked them how they’re doing since the pandemic began.” (HRD 2020)

Research indicates that frequent check-ins from managers helps to reduce workplace fatigue and burnout and dramatically increase employees feelings of meaning, purpose, trust and belonging in their organisation.

In a recent survey, 90% of employees said they perform better when their company supports their emotional wellness ([15Five, 2019](#))

Organisations needs to be proactive in recognising signs of exhaustion and actively take steps to manage the energy of the workforce through stressful periods.

Tools for making wellbeing conversations the norm

- Know what to look for and recognise the signs.
- Regular check-ins from manager or through a buddy system.
- Data-driven monitoring of wellbeing and workload (e.g., through organisation-wide pulse checks)
- Consider innovative ways for employees to access EAP or other relevant mental health supports and services.

Resources:

- [RAW Energy - coaching, tools and support for workplaces and individuals](#)
- [SafeWork NSW Workplace pulse check](#)
- [The Five Pillars of People Risk - Australia \(Marsh\)](#)
- [COVID-19: Why burnout is on the rise | HRD Australia \(hcamag.com\)](#)
- [Overcoming pandemic fatigue: How to reenergize organizations for the long run | McKinsey](#)
- [Is Your Business In A “Covid Coma?” What To Do About Workforce Exhaustion And Overwhelm \(forbes.com\)](#)
- [Women suffering from ‘the Great Exhaustion’ - RN Breakfast - ABC Radio National](#)
- [Wake me up in 2022: working through uncertainty fatigue](#)
- [Direct Practical Coaching - free one on one support for small- medium NSW businesses](#)

Workforce Exhaustion: Combatting exhaustion and creating a fresh start moment
Delivered by one of Transitioning Well’s experienced organisational psychologists.
To book, contact info@transitioningwell.com.au to secure a session in your workplace.



4. COVID VACCINATIONS

Legalities and what this means for employers

Many WayAhead Workplace members have been reaching out and asking about the complex impacts of vaccinations in the workplace. Can employers ethically and legally mandate? We reached out to Georgie Chapman, Partner at HR Legal to help us unpack some of the more frequently asked questions when it comes to this whole new world.

1. Can an employer mandate the COVID-19 vaccination in their workplace beyond government requirements?

In our view it is likely that employers can legally mandate COVID-19 vaccinations on workplace health and safety (OHS) grounds, provided the mandate is implemented lawfully and reasonably. It is important to remember that all employers have WHS obligations to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their workers and visitors to the workplace.

In most industries and for most roles which involve working in close proximity to others, employers will be able to make vaccination against COVID-19 an inherent requirement of the role, and therefore give employees a lawful and reasonable direction to be vaccinated. This will be particularly so in industries where workers are operating in proximity to vulnerable persons, such as health care, aged care and disability services.

Meeting WHS obligations to both employees and others will be one of the key justifications for this being an inherent requirement.

In implementing such a policy outside of public health directions, an employer must adopt a careful and consultative approach consistent with WHS legislation, and it is recommended that advice is sought on process.

2. What if an employee refuses to be vaccinated?

If an employee fails to follow a lawful and reasonable direction to be vaccinated and is therefore unable to fulfil an inherent requirement of their position, they can be subject to disciplinary action, such as unpaid suspension or termination of employment.

However, we recommend employers should adopt a sensitive approach, and seek to understand the reasons prior to proceeding with disciplinary action. Employers should also seek legal advice in order to manage the potential risks such as industrial disputes and termination of employment.

3. Where an employer mandates the COVID-19 vaccine, are they at risk of a discrimination claim?

Vaccination status in itself is not a protected attribute under equal opportunity legislation so this should not give rise to the risk of a discrimination/adverse action claim if an employer chooses to take action against an employee or not employ an individual because of their vaccination status (although employees can still bring these types of claims, even if they are without merit).

However, if an employee refuses to be vaccinated based on a protected attribute under anti-discrimination laws, such as a genuine medical reason or religious belief or activity, the employer can only take action against them on the basis of vaccination being reasonably necessary to protect the health and safety of any person, or the public generally.

If an employer wishes to make vaccination a mandatory requirement, they must prove how this health and safety exception applies. Given the impact of COVID-19, it is likely that most employers would be able to demonstrate that this health and safety exemption applies to them.

This means that in many cases, even if the employee refusing to be vaccinated can point to a “protected attribute” under discrimination law, they may still be unable to perform the inherent requirements of their role, and therefore this will likely provide a defence to any discrimination claim.



4. How do employers gather vaccination status while maintaining privacy?

Employers need to treat employees' disclosure of their vaccination status the same as any other health record and maintain confidentiality. This means that employers must ensure that any personal or health information recorded from their employees is collected, recorded and stored in accordance with its obligations under privacy legislation.

Where the disclosure of vaccination status is a requirement under a state government public health order, or an obligation under an employer's workplace policy because they have introduced a mandatory vaccination policy, then it will be a lawful and reasonable direction to require an employee to provide this information. In other circumstances, where there is no such obligation, an organisation may wish to seek consent from the employees in order to collect vaccination status information.

5. What about the impact that COVID-19 vaccination requirements can have on mental health and wellbeing?

The implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination requirements in workplaces has presented a number of mental health and wellbeing challenges. For some, the topic of vaccination can be a very emotional and polarising subject. In addition, there has been a lot of inconsistent information regarding the vaccines themselves. For those employees who are reluctant to be vaccinated, there may be a range of reasons why they may be concerned, including phobias to needles, perceived risks and side effects, personal and religious beliefs.

Employers are encouraged to adopt a sensitive approach, and seek to understand the reasons why an employee may not want to be vaccinated. Where possible, employees should be referred to their doctor to seek medical advice on vaccination.

Employers should also take proactive steps to manage mental health. This of course does not require an employer to diagnose or treat an employee. Rather, employers need to ensure that employees can perform work safely, and where an employee is experiencing mental health issues, employers should consider offering practicable workplace supports to enable an employee to do so. Employers can implement regular team and individual catch-ups, virtual social arrangements and make HR and/or an Employee Assistance Programs available.

5. SUPPORTING PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA

Sometimes when we think about trauma, we imagine a sudden one off event or a shocking incident. However, the experience of trauma can actually be much more subtle than we often realise. It refers to how events impact the mind and how we relate to the world as a result of that event. When the event or situation we find ourselves in overwhelms our existing coping mechanisms, it impacts our resilience and our sense of self. Of course, how one person responds to a traumatic event will depend on many things. This global pandemic is what is known as a collective or mass trauma and for many this the effect on how we process information and how we cope will not be significantly impacted. Just living through the pandemic in any context may cause a trauma response, but of course there are many who have experienced more extreme circumstances either through losing a loved one to COVID, having ongoing health issues as a result of COVID, being separated by loved ones due to closed borders and lockdowns and financial stress from changes in employment (to name a few).

By Stephanie Thompson,
WayAhead Workplaces Lead

How can Trauma manifest?

Trauma interrupts the connection between different aspects of the way we function and can cause our bodies to stop working which can seriously impact mental and physical health and wellbeing. The experience of trauma has an adverse affect on our prefrontal cortex it can decrease its volume and negatively impact a persons ability to tap into their problem solving brain. It can also trigger the flight or fight response. What this means, is that people who have experienced trauma and are still living in that state may have additional cognitive load. Actions like problem solving, planning, time management and general “thinking through” processes are likely to be much more challenging. Some other common behavioural responses are things like inconsistent communication and level of attention to detail (due to cognitive processing), “big emotions” and difficulty regulating emotions as well as what might be described as being sensitive or defensive when triggered.



Trauma informed management in the workplace

It is important to state here that managers and leaders are in no way required or expected to act as mental health professionals. The purpose and benefit of organisations educating their people about what trauma is and how it can manifest is to both keep the workplace free of those psychosocial risks that can trigger trauma and put people in harms way, as well as by creating a mentally healthy work environment employees are more likely to be higher performing and more engaged resulting in stronger output for the organisation. Educating managers on some base level trauma informed principles, can make a big difference in their empathy and capability to support and get the best out of their people. Here are a few simple skills that may positively influence the workplace experience for people who have been through a collective trauma:

Maintain consistency

During these uncertain times, where almost everything has changed, keeping routines, work loads and expectations consistent wherever possible can minimise the cognitive load for anyone, but especially those with compromised load.

The humble check in

Keeping communication frequent and holding space for team members to share where they are at can be a helpful way for employees to feel safe. Even if in the past it has not been the norm for there to be frequent one on ones, it might be helpful for managers to increase these check ins and keep communication opportunities frequent. This is especially true when working from home and the incidental in person conversations and non verbal cues are non existent.

Boundary management

When people are in their reptilian brain and have stress hormones flooding their body, they are less likely to be making healthy decisions for their overall lifestyle. Supporting team members to prioritise what they need to look after their own wellbeing can make a huge difference for people who have experienced trauma. Lead by example and work towards cultivating a culture where people prioritise their health and wellbeing and remind team members of the need to take breaks, make healthy choices and take care of themselves.

Clear direction and communication

Probably the most significant principle to remember at a time like this when people have been through collective trauma, is to keep conversations clear and to the point. Attempt to leave little room open for individual interpretation. This might go against how a manager has previously worked and require a bit of extra consideration. Give employees clear deadlines, outline the details of a task as much as possible. Give context as to why changes need to be made and how they will be implemented. Talking straight and being specific means the cognitive load for the employee is less likely to become overwhelmed.

Resources:

- <https://www.mhcc.org.au/resource/ticpot-stage-1-2-3/>
- A trauma informed approach to workforce management
<https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/A-Trauma-Informed-Approach-to-Workforce.pdf>
- Blueknot Foundation, Trauma fact sheets and other resources
<https://professionals.blueknot.org.au/resources/>



6. THE GREAT RESIGNATION

By now, you've probably heard the term the 'Great Resignation'. It was coined by Anthony Klotz, an associate professor of management at Texas A&M University in early May 2021 to describe the phenomenon of workers leaving their jobs in large numbers.

In the US, 4.4 million Americans quit their jobs in September 2021 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Great Resignation is predicted to occur in Australia early 2022, but there are signs this is already happening – as it was possibly delayed in Australia due to ongoing and extended lockdowns. An Employment Hero study found 48 per cent of workers are planning on looking for a new job in the next 12 months.

The trend towards looking for more meaning in work has been underway for a long time.

- The pandemic accelerated that shift.
- Workers and leaders have been unsatisfied and suppressed, well before the pandemic.
- People are retreating from pre-covid work patterns and burn-out.

As people quit their jobs, they will be looking for new places to work that can meet their needs and preferences. The opportunity now for organisations is to rethink how work is done, and to reconfigure work so that it is aligned with this new world.

Practical strategies to retain employees and to recruit new ones (be a great workplace)

“Employers have to reconfigure a mindset – workers want to be seen as human beings that have rich lives, and they want to be treated with a degree of humanity. Look at your employees as people first and treat them as people first.”

AARON MCEWAN

Be clear on your purpose

The pandemic has awakened people's hunger for meaning and purpose – people have questioned the value of their work and the sense of meaning it provides.

- Provide a genuine sense of purpose – research identified purpose as fundamental to a culture that retains top talent (Carucci); avoid 'purpose washing' to give the illusion of meaning.
- Connection to mission or purpose is a key support during times of change and transition.
- Acknowledge when someone personally embodies your organisation's purpose.
- Leaders need to be able to communicate a vision and have that understood across a wide variety of groups and locations – requires leaders to be even better communicators than previously.

Provide flexibility

- People are working to live not living to work.
- Employees are considering leaving organisations if they aren't going to have the kind of flexibility they have come to enjoy over the time of the pandemic.

- People will be focusing on how their direct manager interprets the flexibility policy.
- Offer flexible work options.
- Hybrid work as the best alternative in the post pandemic workplace to adapt to the VUCA (Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) environment:
 - » However there are concerns that this may result in inequitable workplaces – it will be difficult to keep people working from home integrated.
 - » Onboarding will be challenging.

When employees say they want flexibility they mean autonomy.

- Providing choice gives people a sense of autonomy.
- “Mandates feel like a violation of autonomy.” (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2001)
- 59% of workers say they would not work for a company that required them to come into a physical office five days per week. (Reisinger & Fetterer, 2001)
- Give employees a choice of where and how to work, when, who they work with, and what they work on.
- Establish principles not policies.
- Give employees the tools they need to work autonomously from anywhere.

Design development into everyday experiences

Support people to develop their competence and mastery in things that matter to them.

- People want to tackle new challenges, push themselves and learn new things.
- Build learning and advancement into people’s roles, rather than having it as a separate activity e.g. job shadowing of higher-level jobs.
- Some people may be satisfied with their level of skill and knowledge and any additional effort in terms of career and development may just be seen as additional work on top of an exhausted workforce.

Resources

Great Resignation in Australia:

- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-30/great-resignation-australians-quitting-jobs-work-balance-covid/100566922>

The real meaning of freedom at work (Adam Grant):

- <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-real-meaning-of-freedom-at-work-116277>

3 steps for employee retention (Ian Cook)

- <https://hbr.org/2021/09/who-is-driving-the-great-resignation>

To Retain Employees, Give Them a Sense of Purpose and Community (hbr.org)

- <https://hbr.org/2021/10/to-retain-employees-give-them-a-sense-of-purpose-and-community>

Forget Flexibility. Your Employees Want Autonomy. (hbr.org)

- <https://hbr.org/2021/10/forget-flexibility-your-employees-want-autonomy>

The Great Resignation: Reducing the impact of the pandemic upon your people Workshop delivered by one of Transitioning Well’s experienced organisational psychologists. To book, contact info@transitioningwell.com.au to secure a session in your workplace.

Transitioning Well

Transitioning Well work with forward thinking companies to help people manage the intersections between life and work.

We do this with a focus on supporting people to successfully navigate major transition points, the moments of truth that have the potential to derail but also provide opportunities for personal and organisational growth. Whether it's having a baby or a career change, a promotion or a personal crisis, we help your team manage these adjustments in a better way.

Our psychologists use progressive, research-led practices to develop structured approaches that are tailored to the need of every organisation. Find out more by visiting our website.

TransitioningWell.com.au

WayAhead Workplaces

For more information on workplace health and wellbeing, check out the WayAhead Workplaces site. Use the links below for a number of free content hubs available for all as well as our Members Resource Library, a free benefit for our members.

WayAheadWorkplaces.org.au

[COVID-19 Hub](#)

[Resource Library](#)

[Small Biz Hub](#)

[Natural Disaster Hub](#)

