

Managing the Easing of Lockdown



When we first went into lockdown last year, adjusting to a completely new way of life was a challenge for many of us. As government restrictions start to ease and we all begin to adjust to another 'new normal', there will be more challenges to overcome as things change again.

Some of you may have been working throughout the last year, and had to adjust to many changes along the way; and some of us are just returning to work now. Either way, that's a lot of adjustment for everyone.

It's very likely that you, or people who are returning to work with you, may be feeling some of the following:

- Stressed and unprepared for the changes that are coming.
- Anxious, afraid or panicked about the impact of the changes.
- Angry or frustrated if others aren't following the guidance the way you are or you don't agree with the measures.
- Conflicted or confused about the advice and how you should interpret it.
- Protective of your lockdown routine because you enjoy it or feel nervous about more change or uncertainty.
- Grief for people who have been lost to the virus.
- Uneasy about relationships that have changed during full lockdown.
- Distrustful of how things are portrayed in the media.

If you are feeling stressed or unprepared for the changes

Remind yourself of exactly what is changing and when here:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Find out how this will affect your role by speaking to your line manager or email HR@GUK.co.uk.

Remember that you can only control how you interpret the guidelines. If you are concerned that someone is not following the guidance, then gently explain to them that you are following the government advice and will be continuing to do that.

If you know you'll come into contact with people who are not following advice, remember you can easily pick up rapid tests from a local test centre.

If you are feeling anxious about the changes and what they will mean for you

Anxiety is a normal response to life changes, especially those which you can't control, but if you feel as if your anxiety is having an effect on your day to day life, there are some things you can try.

Have a look at our resources here

<https://guk.co.uk/hr-toolkit> for some steps for wellbeing.

You can also contact our EAP on <https://employeeassistance.org.uk/>

If wearing a mask is something you find difficult

Being required to wear a face mask or face covering is one very obvious change to how we live, and lots of people have understandably found wearing them uncomfortable or anxiety-inducing.

There is lots of information here for practical things you can try if wearing a mask is causing you anxiety or stress: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/mask-anxiety-face-coverings-and-mental-health>

Don't judge people who aren't wearing masks. Don't assume that by not wearing a mask, someone is 'just being selfish' or 'breaking the rules'. Many people are exempt from wearing masks, but their reasons might not be obvious. If you work in a place where masks are compulsory, make sure you understand the exemption rules of your workplace.

Some tips to make wearing a face mask easier



Do something to relax before and after wearing your mask



If wearing a mask steams up your glasses, try washing your glasses with soapy water before hand



Choose a face covering that fits better or is made of a different material

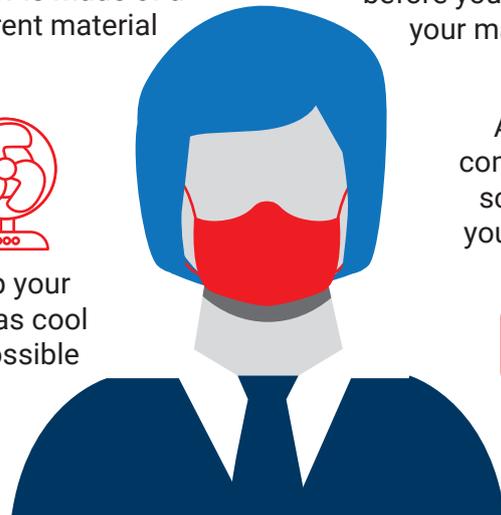


Get some fresh air before you put on your mask



Keep your body as cool as possible

Add a comforting scent to your mask



If you are grieving for people you've lost this year

Losing someone close to you is very tough at the best of times, but grieving during the pandemic has been made even harder because we've not been able to do lots of the things that we normally do to mark someone's death, and many of us are experiencing grief in a more isolated way.

If you, or someone you know, is grieving, you might want to check out Cruse, a national charity that helps people with bereavement. They have a whole section on managing grief during the pandemic here (<https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/grieving-and-isolation>) and they also have a helpline and webchat which you can access through their website: <https://www.cruse.org.uk>

Remember that this is uncharted territory for everyone- so there is no 'normal' response to lockdown or lockdown easing. Feeling stressed about it is completely understandable, and you're not alone. Accepting this is the first step of dealing with any anxiety around adjusting to new guidelines.