

HR Lessons for Addressing Anxiety on the Road to Reopening



On June 12, 2020 Rosen Group sponsored a virtual forum for HR leaders to discuss their approaches to addressing anxiety for themselves and their employees as businesses and organizations move toward reopening during this challenging time of the COVID-19 crisis. Moderated by Scott Rosen, over 40 HR professionals participated and shared their wisdom with one another. Here's a recap of what we heard. Watch the one-hour event at: <https://youtu.be/jhVutN6yhqw>

WORKPLACE PRACTICES

- Keep in mind that it's not only the policies and procedures that are important, but additionally the well-being of the leadership and of the employees of the organization
- Give employees room to plan; be transparent about plans to reopen
- Communicate to employees what you are doing to ensure they are retuning to a "healthy" workplace environment
- Set up virtual town halls for employees to interact with leadership and each other
- Leverage the power of ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) within the organization to conduct smaller discussions regarding stress, anxiety, and mental wellness; if you do not have existing ERGs, consider creating some
- Make all employees feel like they are being taken care of – regardless of position
- Be consistently open to employee feedback
- Provide temperature screening upon arrival to office
- Require face coverings except when in personal workspace
- Minimize face to face meetings - encourage the use of virtual meetings
- Enforce social distancing in open common areas- lunch rooms, training rooms, conference rooms
- Provide staggered start times
- Use stairs not elevators (when possible)
- Keep desk clear of paper and personal items
- Require employees who have tested positive or have symptoms of COVID-19 to have clearance by his or her doctor before returning to the office
- Cease work events or social gatherings
- Follow occupancy rules for your organization's building
- Continue to remind employees that the necessary precautions, although sometimes inconvenient, are enforced to keep them safe
- Send out weekly emails to remind employees how they should be monitor their health and the health of their families
- Encourage employees the opportunity to take PTO and enjoy time with their families
- Conduct webinars on wellness and mental health
- Practice empathy in the workplace
- Acquire the necessary PPP resources (e.g., disinfectant, hand sanitizer, masks) for your employees
- The onus is not just on HR to reassure employees that all necessary safety precautions are being met – it can make a world of difference to hear it from top-level management as well
- Allow for open discussion regarding mental health (e.g. anxiety, depression) as many employees are likely affected
- Provide continuous reassurance to employees; ensure there is a continuous flow of information between employees and management
- Reevaluate the mental health services currently offered to employees and see if there is room for improvement
- Remind employees about the benefits currently available to them

PERSONAL PRACTICES

- Adapt an "expansive mindset" when dealing with anxiety – take a step back and put things in perspective
- Consciously "check in" on your anxiety; practicing meditation or yoga are great outlets to manage this stress
- Address your own anxiety before addressing others'
- Find time to center yourself and focus on your mental and physical health; this can be done through exercise, spending time outdoors or conducting video chats with friends
- Maintain a healthy, regular sleep schedule
- Be sure to maintain a healthy work-life balance (especially if working from home)
- If possible, try to determine an end time for work each day
- Continue to wash hands, disinfect commonly shared surfaces, and avoid touching your face