



Returning to work after COVID-19

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FROM TAL AND ASSURE PROGRAMS

Over the last few months, we've established new ways of working, with many of us working from home with new routines and ways of adapting.

Many organisations are starting to consider how they transition their workforce back to an office environment and it's likely your employer will be doing the same.

Every organisation will be different and it will be helpful for you to take an active role in ensuring a successful return to work for you.

This guide will help you reflect on your personal changes in response to working from home during COVID-19, as well as advice from Assure Programs to help you transition back into the office environment.

HELPING YOU STAY POSITIVE DURING COVID-19

As a leader in the life insurance industry, TAL has always been focused on helping Australians through life's biggest challenges. COVID-19 has made many of us realise we live in an unpredictable world. As the situation continues, we may be feeling increased uncertainty and potentially a sense of loss.

That's why we've partnered with Assure Programs to provide resources, tools and expertise to super fund members who might need some extra support with the challenges of the current crisis.

ABOUT TAL

TAL is a leading Australian life insurer, helping people protect what matters most in their lives for 150 years. Together with its partners, TAL provides life insurance and disability benefits to over 4 million Australians and in 2019, paid over \$2.3 billion in claims to more than 34,000 customers. TAL partners with leading superannuation funds to provide members with options to protect their future choices with insurance through super.

ABOUT ASSURE PROGRAMS

Assure Programs is a leading mental health organisation with an extensive network of experienced psychologists and specialists. With a holistic model of counselling, wellbeing coaching and evidence-based development programs, Assure Programs helps individuals, teams and organisations across the entire mental wellbeing spectrum.

Personal changes

More time at home with our loved ones may have highlighted positives as well as negatives in our relationships or work lives.



RELATIONSHIPS

Perhaps you feel closer than ever and have enjoyed your partners company during this time. On the other hand, maybe you've experienced a more challenging time and been dealing with more conflict than usual. If this is the case, you're not alone: many couples are experiencing increased conflict during this time.

Regardless of your situation, reflect on the last few months and think through any changes you would like to make for the better. Now is a great opportunity to reset and implement changes you may have been putting off for some time. The same can be said for family relationships: reflect on the positives and the negatives and decide if you would like to make any changes moving forward.



WORK

This challenging period might have prompted you to consider whether you're doing work that's fulfilling and enjoyable. Or perhaps you've realised you're in need of a change in role or simply a better work-life balance. Think about how you can implement some positive changes into your working life and what you need to be able to achieve these changes.

Habits and routine

What has changed for you since COVID-19? Have you made any positive changes to your daily routines that you would like to keep? This could be an opportune time to implement longer-term positive changes into your life. You could consider some of these areas to establish a new routine.



EXERCISE

Over the last past few months, have you established a new workout routine or daily exercise that you would like to continue? This could be as simple as a building a daily walk into your routine before work or going for a walk while taking a phone call.

If not, perhaps this is something you'd like to do when you transition back into the work environment. Try to start any changes you'd like to implement from your first day back: this will make it easier to establish and stick to your new routine.



CONTACT WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES

Despite not being able to see an extended network of friends and family members face-to-face during this time, many people report having had more contact over the phone and other social media channels. Think about ways you can keep up this type of contact in your new normal. This might also include quality time with your partner or children. What has your quality time looked like since COVID-19? Is there anything that you implemented into your daily life that you would like to continue like a date night, family night or games night?



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

What else have you enjoyed about this situation? Have you enjoyed cooking more? Have you been saving more? Have you developed a new hobby or passion that you'd like to continue? Consider the positives of the situation and decide if you would like to carry any of these in your new routine moving forward.

Transition back to work

If you've been working from home, consider how you're feeling about returning to the workplace. You might have positive emotions such as excitement or relief, or perhaps you're feeling a little anxious.

If that's the case, take some time to think about why. Is it linked to the commute to work? Being back in the office surrounded by people or seeing particular colleagues or managers? Is it linked to your work/life balance and about leaving your family members at home?

If you're feeling anxious, it's important to seek help. Speak to your manager about how you're feeling and brainstorm possible solutions. Depending on your role and the organisation, it may be possible for you to work from home for longer or have more days working from home in the future. Discuss this as soon as possible to determine if this flexibility is possible.

There are some other things that can help you have a smooth transition back into the workplace:

- Ask your manager if it's possible to have a phased return to work, splitting time between working from home and working from the office
- Consider your commute options: how best to get into work
- If you have a friend at work, you might like to arrange a coffee for your first morning back
- Think about your working day and how you'd like this to be. If you have scope to manage your own diary, consider your work/life balance. When you put meetings in the diary, allow time for lunch and consider your start and finish times too
- Keep up regular communication with your team. If you had weekly online meetings with your team, consider how you could continue these in person if you enjoyed this contact with your colleagues
- And remember to ask for help. This next phase may take some time and we're here to help you navigate this time in the best way for you.

Hopefully this has helped you process you're thoughts feelings about going back to your workplace, what you've enjoyed about working from home, and any considerations to your personal routine or habits that will help you thrive.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR YOUR WELLBEING



If you'd like to continue your mental health journey, Head to Health is a website provided by the Australian Department of Health that brings together a range of mental wellbeing information, programs and forums available to the wider community.

Visit headtohealth.gov.au