



# Anxiety

## Returning to work after shielding

Covid-19 has impacted on us all as individuals, families and as employees the world over. By March 2020 almost 1/3 of the world's population was in lockdown\*. As individuals and organisations, we have all had to make changes to how we manage our day to day lives.

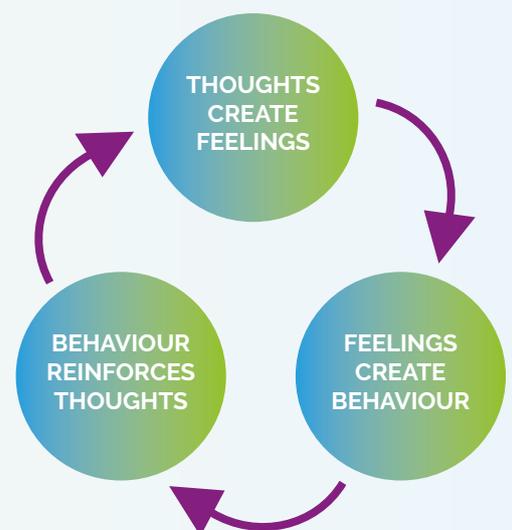
For those of us that have been shielding for ourselves or for family reasons, the impact of returning to a new type of normal is understandably causing a range of emotions and feelings. Some of us may feel a sense of relief that things are returning to a more 'normal' way of life and may be looking forward to seeing colleagues, friends, and family. However, for others this may all feel very overwhelming and the thought of going into places where there are other people even with social distancing measures, can feel frightening and cause feelings of anxiety.

Whatever your individual reaction, it is important to understand there is no right, wrong or normal way of feeling, as this set of circumstances is something we have never experienced before. It is important for us as individuals to find a way to achieve a supported transition back into the world and the workplace that feels safe, comfortable, and achievable for you. Acknowledge it's likely to come with mixed feeling and some anxiety.

### What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a common feeling that we all experience at some stages in our lives. It is a normal emotional response to a situation we find stressful. It is also a biological response designed by our bodies to prepare us for challenges and evokes a 'fight or flight' set of hormones and body readiness. Remembering that what may cause one person anxiety is not necessarily something that will invoke the same response in another reminds us that we all respond differently to different situations. Again, understanding that there is not a right or wrong way to respond – just the way we do individually.

Anxiety may impact on us physically as well as emotionally and affect our behaviour. We have a thought (this can be conscious or unconscious), which triggers an emotion and we will often behave or respond in relation to that emotion.



## How may this affect me?

### Emotionally / Behaviourally

Sleeping | Dreams | Nightmares | Pessimism | Anger |  
Poor concentration | Withdrawal from situations &  
others | Avoidance

### Physically

Dry mouth | Muscle tension | Headaches | Rapid heart  
rate | Sweating | Diarrhoea | Health flare ups – dermatitis  
| Asthma | Feeling 'shaky'

## How can I help myself?

Follow recommended guidelines nationally and organisationally and ensure you are talking with your Line Manager / HR Dept. / Occupational Health team about your return to the workplace. Understand that feeling anxious is normal and when we have been isolated from others and the world as we knew it, we are likely to have a range of emotions associated with changing this. With change comes loss and that loss may be connected with losing one's safety and security. Washing hands, social distancing, wearing PPE where advised and remaining at home if advised to do so or you become unwell. If work have additional precautions in place ensure you are aware of what they are and following them. Familiarise yourself of any changes whilst you have been away from work. Talk to your Line Manager, do you need to shadow for a short period of time to feel comfortable with any new processes. If you have thoughts and ideas that may assist your team, speak up. Much of this is still new to many of your colleagues too, adjustment and familiarisation with new situations takes time. Remember it is good to talk. Often, others may well be feeling the same and Covid-19 has put us all in circumstances that are new, different and are continuing to evolve.

Anxiety is a normal response to a situation or event that we feel is stressful. Speak to your manager, colleagues or remember your Vivup Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is here to assist **24/7** on **03303 800 658**

Vivup have been taking calls from employees across the NHS throughout the Covid-19 period. Our team are there to offer advice, information, and support 24/7.

## Useful Resources

### BPM Technique

If you feel overwhelmed at any point, try this simple breathing technique.

#### Breathe

Take a deep breath, close your eyes if you can and just concentrate on the here and now. Listen to your breathing.

#### Pause

Concentrate on your breath. What is happening currently, notice how you are feeling and think about what will help right now. Who is around to support you? Has something happened like this before and what did you do then that helped?

#### Move

When you have considered your options, choose the one most likely to assist and action it.

Your EAP also provides lots of useful resources and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy online workbooks available to download based on anxiety / stress / low mood and many others. Visit [vivup.co.uk](https://www.vivup.co.uk)

