



c&fs EAP

Employee Assistance Program

Assisting Co-Workers and Employees during the COVID-19 Changes

With all the changes that have occurred since the COVID-19 crisis began, everyone is experiencing change and loss. Most of us are unable to see friends, family, and engage in regular activities like parties, shopping and going to restaurants. We know some people are struggling, and we do not have to wait for a crisis to provide support. Sometimes others will express this as stress, sadness, or sometimes increased sensitivity. Every individual copes with loss differently depending upon various factors, including past experience, general coping skills and the availability of support by family, friends and co-workers. Helping one another through this experience will benefit both individuals and organizations.

Everyone has different past experiences and skills to manage how they are reacting to the situation - changes will impact different people at different times.

What you could do to help:

- Acknowledge and empathize with how others are feeling.
- Be transparent and communicate regularly about changes and expectations in the workplace.
- Understand that others may be sad and possibly sensitive.
- Respect others desire for privacy. Honor requests for time, and desire not to talk.
- Offer specific assistance – helping with a project, requests for PTO and extensions, when possible.
- Follow all guidelines provided by the the authorities to minimize risk of exposure to reassure and keep everyone safe from to the COVID-19 virus.
- Remember to include others in informal discussions and gatherings to discuss topics other than work or the virus. Let them decide whether to join.
- Be patient - and don't compare other's reactions to your experience. It is helpful to respect each struggle.
- Get "face" time with others - even over video. Much of our communication is non-verbal and video allows for more information about how others are managing.

What you could say to help:

- **Lead with strengths:**
"Thank you for... (specific action)"
"I noticed when you (identify an act of kindness or success)"
- **Reach for problem solving:**
"How have you solved this problem in the past?"
"To whom could you talk to that has more information or perspective?"
"What have you done in the past to be successful?"
- **Identify hope:**
"We are in this together..."
"Tell me more about how you what things to be..."
"I remember when you overcame this before..."
- Sharing and listening to stories gives witness to this experience and may provide ideas about other ways to manage.
- Avoid minimizing/rationalizing this experience or being directive about how the person "should" manage.

Everyone will be managing at a different pace. We are all experiencing losses, and we will all need different space and time to process. Judgement of others reactions to this experience could cause turmoil and reduce productivity. Getting "back to normal" is not an option right now, being patient and kind with one another will provide a foundation to develop a new way to work and interaction as we move forward. EAP is here to help, call 716-681-4300 or visit <https://eap.cfsbny.org/>.