

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## *Coping With COVID-19 Re-entry*

As COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and restrictions are being relaxed in some locations, some staff who have been working remotely are beginning to return to their physical offices and (in some places) people are cautiously beginning to resume some of their pre-pandemic activities and routines. This season of re-entry, however, is likely to feel strange and stir up some anxiety. During such seasons of uncertainty and stress, it is often helpful to discuss your experiences with others. This discussion guide is designed to be used in conjunction with our companion tips sheet on *Coping With COVID-19 Re-entry: Returning to the office or going out in public after lockdown*.

### About Discussion Groups

A discussion group can provide a way for a group of coworkers or colleagues to come together to explore and share their experiences. At their best, discussion groups create an emotionally safe space that allow participants to explore complex experiences together in community, learn more about each other, and extend and receive empathy and support.

It is important to allow adequate time for sharing and reflection. Depending on group size, discussion groups usually require 45 – 90 minutes. For groups of more than 34 people, a facilitator can be helpful to ensure the discussion stays on topic and that all participants are invited to contribute.

An effective discussion group generally has a number of elements:

- ✓ Group members are clear on the purpose and ground rules of the discussion. For example:
  - It is not therapy. Rather, it is a chance to learn more about each other's experiences and perspectives on the topic.
  - All contributions should be met with respect.
  - Group members can contribute (or not contribute) as they wish.
  - Group members should not share the specifics of other people's contributions outside the group discussion.
- ✓ Group members should feel safe and comfortable expressing their experiences, ideas, and feelings.
- ✓ All members of the group should have a chance to speak, express their ideas and feelings freely, and to pursue or finish out their thoughts. Group members should feel invited (but not pressured) to share.

## Discussion Questions

### If you are about to emerge from stay-at-home restrictions or return to a shared workplace:

1. How do you feel about going out in the community more or returning to a shared workplace?
  - a. What do you feel most anxious about?
  - b. What are you most looking forward to?
2. What do you anticipate looking and feeling different?
3. Making decisions about what sorts of activities feel “safe enough” (e.g., places you will go, things you will do) is complicated during times like these. What are some of the factors influencing your decisions?
4. What are some things you want to keep in mind as you start to go out more or return to a shared workplace?
5. What are some strategies that help you when you are feeling anxious?
6. What are things your organization is doing to protect the health and safety of employees during this time?
7. If you could say anything to your manager/organization...
  - a. What questions would you ask?
  - b. What requests would you make?
  - c. What recommendations would you offer?

### If you have already emerged from stay-at-home restrictions or returned to a shared workplace:

1. What has this experience been like for you?
  - a. What sorts of feelings and reactions have you noticed?
  - b. What felt most strange or different?
  - c. Has anything surprised you? If so, what?
  - d. What have you found most challenging or frustrating?
  - e. What have you missed most from “normal life”?
  - f. What have you found most liberating or enjoyable about leaving the house more or returning to a shared workplace?
2. What has helped you most?
  - a. What has helped you feel safer during this season?
  - b. What has helped you manage stress and anxiety during this season?
  - c. Was there anything that your manager or the organization did that has been particularly helpful?

3. Has there been anything that your manager or the organization has done that has been *unhelpful* or caused additional stress?
4. What worries you most right now?
5. If you could change one thing about your living or working routines right now, what would it be?
6. If you could say anything to your manager/organization...
  - a. What questions would you ask?
  - b. What requests would you make?
  - c. What changes would you like to see?
  - d. What recommendations would you offer?