# CARElink

# Psychological stress at the workplace through COVID-19

**Information for managers**

## What pressures and stresses can the COVID-19 situation cause for a company's employees?

- The sheer uncertainties of the situation and how long it is likely to last (a marathon, not a sprint).
- Fear of getting infected at work and taking the infection home.
- COVID-19 cases in the employee's own family.
- Possibly their own previous quarantine experience.
- Pressures or a crisis at home through loss of employment, economic hardship or similar.
- Conflicts within the workteam arising from the new work situation (team splitting, working from home etc.).
- Uncertainty over the employer's changed expectations.

## Which employees are likely to be affected most?

**Employees...**

- … who are relatively new, if they have not yet been well integrated into the team.
- … who are older or who are at higher risk of infection because of a pre-existing medical condition.
- … with a family member in a (high-)risk group.
- … who personally know someone (a colleague or a family member) who has fallen more seriously ill.
- … who have had longer contact with an individual (e.g. a family member) infected.
- … who are going through a separate life crisis already (e.g. debt, divorce, partner's unemployment).
- … who feel lonely or socially isolated.

## What can you as a manager do for your team members?

**10 recommendations**

1. Make them feel you are there for them – by telephone, too. Set a good example and exude confidence and calm.
2. Provide a clear hierarchy and clear communication: leadership gives reassurance in crisis times.
3. Give them frequent praise and appreciation for their work and their commitment.
4. Make a point of regularly discussing your joint work achievements to date, the risks you currently face and the outcomes you can collectively expect.
5. Do all you can to provide them with good working conditions, despite the pressures and stress.
6. Try to keep your teams as stable as possible. Make sure the work is evenly shared among them – and the working hours and any special time off, too.
7. Emphasize what decisions you can make as a unit and what scope your individual team members have.
8. Talk regularly – one-on-one, too – with the individuals who seem to be most affected, including simply asking them how they are feeling.
9. Avoid accusations or reproaches, especially towards any team members who may test positive for COVID-19: infectious diseases are stigmatizing enough.
10. If an employee gets angry or rude, don't take it personally. Talk to them about the special situation that everyone is in at present and ask them what they need and how you can help and support them.

# What advice can you give your team members?

## At work

- •Give yourself regular microbreaks (of 2-3 minutes each).
- Make sure you drink and eat enough.
- Talk with your colleagues about what you've done together.
- Be nice to each other and keep your physical distance, too!

## At home

- Try to keep to a suitable daily structure.
- Make sure you get enough sleep.
- Keep physically fit.
- Avoid too much alcohol or cigarettes or any other mood-changing substances.
- Define a specific time for deliberate regular relaxation.
- Plan pleasant activities (e.g. walks, games, taking a bath).
- Do things that you can control and design.
- Talk with someone about how you're really feeling.
- Don't just talk about work: talk, too, about other (and especially positive) things in your life.
- Set yourself clear limits for your media consumption, and get your news and information from reliable sources.

And remember: you are not alone!