



EMPLOYEE SERIES

Tips for supporting a co-worker who is anxious about Covid-19

Below are some suggestions that will help you to support your colleagues in managing their anxiety around COVID-19:

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Detect their anxiety. Encourage people to be self-aware by asking themselves questions such as:

 - Am I ruminating so much on coronavirus that I can't focus on work?

When people are unable to communicate their anxiety, they may express different emotions such as frustration or anger or out of character behaviours. Look for signs of distress in those around you and try to be understanding and tolerant if colleagues are experiencing distress.
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Approach people who are anxious. Let people know that you've noticed their distress and confirm that talking with them about it is okay. Recognise the wider coronavirus concerns and nationwide stress. Validating the person's emotions is essential. If someone confirms they're feeling anxious, show them that you understand. If you can't comprehend why someone is worried, take their feelings seriously. Sometimes talking about it, feeling validated and heard is all it takes to make people feel better.
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Help with a panic attack. Sometimes anxiety escalates into a panic attack. Panic attacks aren't always caused by dire situations. The simple perception of danger – be it real or not – can be enough. Reassure colleagues suffering a panic attack that everything will be okay and focus their attention on something external to try and shift the focus. More information on panic attacks and their symptoms can be found here: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/panic-attack>
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The risk of using facts. The problem with using facts about the coronavirus, often with the intention of calming a person down, is that anxiety often leads to vigilance and hyper vigilance. An anxious person is likely to know more about coronavirus than you do as they could have been feeding their growing fear on a diet of live blogs and catastrophic headlines. Focus on the emotions and encourage them to seek out recent, relevant and authentic sources.
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How to stop anxiety spreading. Discourage communicating non-evidence based "facts", rumours and dystopian stories. Rumours and hearsay, be they verbal or digital, can have a detrimental effect to workplace morale. Encourage anxious colleagues to ask questions of management who will then support them with an informed reply.
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Long-term anxiety issues? For some, coronavirus will be the root cause of their anxiety, and their troubles are reactive. But for others, living with longer-term anxiety issues, the coronavirus may simply be the spark that ignites deeper issues. If a person is predisposed for anxiety, encourage them to seek professional help.

If you would like to book an appointment and /or speak with one of our Counsellors, it's as easy as calling 1300 66 77 00 or New Zealand 0800 327 669 or visit our website www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au